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THE DRAMA OF SAVAGE PEOPLES



# THE DRAMA OF SAVAGE PEOPLES

BY

LOOMIS HAVEMEYER, PH.D.

INSTRUCTOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY IN THE  
SHEFFIELD SCIENTIFIC SCHOOL OF YALE UNIVERSITY



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TO  
ALBERT GALLOWAY KELLER  
WHOSE INSPIRATION AND UNTIRING HELP  
MADE THIS WORK POSSIBLE  
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED



## PREFACE

Under the influence of the study of evolution, especially social evolution, and of the science of society, it has become a practice to investigate the simpler stages of social institutions in order to be resolved as to their essential nature. Thus, Frazer has done much with the early history of religion; Westermarck, with that of marriage; and Tylor with that of culture in general.

Among social institutions must be included also the drama. What can we find out about the nature of the drama by studying its earlier stages? The following work is an attempt to go back of the Greek drama, which has currently been conceived of as the source of the dramatic art, and to develop the more primitive phases of this institution. Such a study leads one among savage peoples the world over, with the result of revealing, in their various rites, ceremonies, dances, and pleasures, the germ of the drama. It is very crude in its beginning, yet it shows the earliest known steps which man took in this line; and, the simpler forms being at length set in the series, we may say that we have carried one more social institution further back towards its origin.

There are many parallels to be drawn between the drama of the savages and that of the Greeks

and the peoples of the Middle Ages. These are fields for specialists, and what is put in here, from well-attested authorities, is for the purpose of connecting the savage drama with later forms, rather than to try to add anything to these much disputed subjects.

The investigation of the drama of the savage peoples is a new enterprise, for no one has hitherto done more than scratched the surface here and there. There will inevitably appear inconsistencies or false conclusions which I hope to correct as I learn of them from criticism and from further studies of my own.

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I here acknowledge the valuable assistance that I have so courteously received in the preparation of this work from Professor A. G. Keller, Professor A. L. Bishop, Professor T. D. Goodell, Mr. J. R. Crawford, of Yale University; Mr. C. H. Ward of The Taft School; and for the reading of the manuscript, to Miss Lucy S. Taintor of Hartford, Connecticut.

LOOMIS HAVEMEYER

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THE DRAMA OF SAVAGE PEOPLES



*THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
DRAMA*



## CHAPTER I

### *THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAMA*

ONE of the vital services to knowledge performed by the science of society has been the disclosure of the earlier and simpler forms of societal institutions. This has immensely lengthened perspective and has also, as a corollary to that, brought these institutions into the range of the great modern doctrine of evolution. Orderly sequences from the simple to the complex have shown the latter as arising naturally from the former, where previously complex forms had been conceived of as appearing suddenly, and also inexplicably save on the hypothesis of some speculative necessity or coincidence. A few years ago there could not have been a conception of the evolution of marriage and the family, of property, or government.

Similarly with the drama, whatever may have been suspected by certain advanced scholars, the youth of twenty years ago certainly did not see in the drama an evolution of form out

of form in a series of ascending complexity. And it was not so long ago that it was not thought worth while, even by scholars, to go back of the Greeks to secure a point of departure for the history of plays and play acting.

It is now, however, well recognized that the place to seek for the simple stages of societal institutions is not in so civilized a community as, for example, that of Greece, but among savage peoples. Here are found the less derived forms of the industrial organization, communal property, animism, undeveloped forms of the family and government. Ethnographers have been able to explode many long-cherished ideas as to the beginnings of some of the institutions of civilization. Until recently, for instance, it was supposed by many people that circumcision originated with and was peculiar to the Jews; but a study of savage peoples reveals the fact that a great many of them have this practice. Thus out of ethnography comes the lengthening of the backward perspective of societal evolution in general and of the evolution of the several societal institutions in particular. No one, so far as we know, has tried to piece together the earlier stages of the drama so that we may attain to a wider sweep



of this social form through societal evolution. Historians of the drama have not been trained or informed along the lines of research that reveal the simpler, more primitive stages; and anthropologists and sociologists have paid less attention to this part of the social field than they have to the evolution of societal forms more closely connected with society's major and inevitable interests. When they have indicated the importance of the former, it has been in passing.

In the case of the topic now before us, Sumner laid out for future study a section on societal self-gratification, parallel with self-maintenance and self-perpetuation, and including the drama, but he never developed it. Frazer has a great mass of material on the vegetation ceremonies, but that is in connection with his major interest — religion. Groos, in his book "The Play of Man," devotes himself more to actual play in the general meaning of the word than to the drama. And so it is with many other writers on anthropologic and sociological subjects; they touch on matters closely connected with the drama, but it is nearly always from another point of view than that of the dramatic.

Doubtless in the minds of many people there is a vague idea that savages do act, though in

a crude and boisterous manner, and that such acting has significance for them, although the fact is merely of curious interest to a man of higher culture. What we mean to show is that the savage drama is the lineal antecedent of all modern forms, and hence that a knowledge of it is needful, in order to fill out the perspective and to afford a lapse of time sufficient to allow a conception of evolution in this social form. Dramatic representation is enacted by practically all the "lower" races in some primitive form; and among many tribes it is highly developed. To most of them it is of the utmost importance, for through it they not only seek relations with the imaginary environment of ghosts and spirits and keep the gods on their side in the struggle for existence, but derive also a great deal of pleasure through the satisfaction of the dramatic "instinct." A study of ethnography shows, in many instances, not only the dramatic worship of the gods of vegetation, as in Greece, but also a very much higher stage of art. Before the Spanish Conquest, for example, the Aztecs had developed the art of acting to a high degree of perfection.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Biart, "The Aztecs," pp. 302 ff.; Buckham, "The Theatre of the Greeks," p. 99.

It would be possible to amass a great deal of evidence to show that the propensity for imitation, which is the basis of the drama, appears even in many of the lower animals. "A tiny kitten creeps from its nest, still blind, but as soon as even one eye is open, it toys with every rolling, running, sliding, or fluttering object within its reach. If a cat keeps running after such a ball, in time a sort of rôle consciousness comes to her, something like that which accompanies human actions that are intentionally make-believe. When the ball stops rolling, the kitten starts it up again by a gentle tap with her paw in order to begin the game again. . . . This seems like a conscious self-deception, involving some of the most subtle psychological elements of the pleasure that play gives."<sup>1</sup> A kitten or a dog that plays with a ball as though it were an animal is not in the least fooled into thinking that it is alive and good to eat. If he only chased the rolling object once and then dropped it when he found no life there, the conclusion would be that he did not care for it as a mere object of play, but when a dog will

<sup>1</sup> Groos, "Play of Animals," pp. 130, 132, xix; H. Spencer, "Principles of Psychology," Vol. I, pp. 629 ff.; G. J. Romanes, "Animal Intelligence."

beg to have a ball thrown for him, we may infer that it is the play part that he enjoys. Animals will very often imitate hunting for the pleasure they get out of it, when they know perfectly well that there is no prey to be gotten.

Ridgeway, after describing sympathetic magic, of which we shall have more to say later, tells the following story of a cat which well illustrates this dramatic "instinct" in animals. "It may be that this belief in the efficacy of some mimetic representation of a successful hunt may be found even among the lower animals. The following fact may point in this direction. A tabby cat, of perhaps more than average intelligence, was seated on my knees one winter evening beside the fireplace. A mouse came out from under the further end of the fender, whereupon she sprang from my knee and caught it. Next evening she repeated the same performance, getting up and sitting on my knee, and then suddenly springing across the hearthrug to the spot where she had secured her prey on the previous night. Almost every evening that winter she repeated the experiment, never springing at the imaginary mouse from any other place than from my knee. The following winter she

recommenced the mimetic performance of her successful hunt, and the next winter she again did the same. It was only last winter that she finally abandoned her attempts to elicit a mouse by repeating the action which had once proved eminently successful. I may add that in the interval the fireplace had been completely altered. The same cat when searching for mice or when listening to them when beyond her reach does not growl, but addresses them in the dulcet tones of endearment which she uses to her kittens.”<sup>1</sup>

The desire to imitate shows itself to a very marked degree among children the world over. In savage communities practically the only amusement of the children consists in imitating the more serious acts and experiences of their parents. Thus they pick up the *mores*, they build small houses, they hunt and fish as they have seen their fathers do.<sup>2</sup> The Australian boy sets up housekeeping with his *gin*.<sup>3</sup> While one boy sits peacefully by the door of his hut, another rushes up and tries to abduct his wife, just as he will do in later life. A make-believe

<sup>1</sup> Ridgeway, "Origin of Tragedy," pp. 106 ff.

<sup>2</sup> K. Groos, "The Play of Man," p. 302; Tylor, "Primitive Culture," pp. 72 ff.; Codrington, "The Melanesians," pp. 341-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Gin*, Australian word for "woman."

fight or even an imitation of a mock fight results and the stronger wins the girl.<sup>1</sup>

The powerful influence upon civilized children, when they are brought into contact with savages, is well illustrated by the following example recounted by Signe Rink, who spent her childhood in Greenland. "Like all European children in the country, my brother and sister and I had a genuine passion for everything pertaining to Greenland, and accordingly, as soon as the door was shut by our elders, we tried in every way possible and by all sorts of mimicry to identify ourselves with our playmates. My brother got himself up as a seal hunter from head to foot, and I became an Eskimo woman with a waddling gait, who was sternly forbidden to leave the house."<sup>2</sup>

A child is forever imitating the things which he hears and sees. These may be certain movements and actions of his parents, or other people, with whom he comes in contact; or perhaps some story such as Robinson Crusoe catches his fancy. In either case he proceeds to act out the thrilling adventures in his backyard. But it is not necessarily an actual person nor

<sup>1</sup> N. W. Thomas, "The Natives of Australia," pp. 131-2.

<sup>2</sup> K. Groos, "The Play of Man," p. 304; J. Sully, "Studies in Childhood."

one embodied in a story, whom the child imitates. "During a long and complicated play he will be a doorpost, a tree, a seat, a wagon, and a locomotive, and endeavor by his motions and carriage to support these bold illusions."<sup>1</sup> At times he will take the part of animals, and, in order to carry out the deception, he will bark like a dog, snarl like a cat, fly like a bird, and swim like a fish.<sup>2</sup>

There has been much discussion as to whether the imitative desire in man could be called an instinct. Aristotle thinks that "Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of creatures; and through imitation he acquires his earliest learning. And, indeed, every one feels a natural pleasure in things imitated."<sup>3</sup>

Groos, in his book, "The Play of Animals," calls imitation an instinct, but in his later vol-

<sup>1</sup> K. Groos, "The Play of Man," p. 301.

<sup>2</sup> K. Groos, "The Play of Man," p. 301; J. Sully, "Studies in Childhood," pp. 25, 36 ff.; Magnin, "Les Origines du Théâtre Moderne," pp. 9 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, "Poetics," IV, 2-4; S. H. Butcher, "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts," p. 15.

ume on "The Play of Man" he repudiates his former position. He says that, once granted the fact of instinct at all, an affirmative answer seems imperative to one who is familiar with the workings of this impulse in men and animals. "On these grounds I have committed myself in my former work to the designation of imitation as an inborn instinct, and yet I must admit the logical inconsistency of this, since the very conception of instinct dispenses with the use of imitation."<sup>1</sup> For our present purposes, however, it is not necessary to go too far into the field of psychology in order to determine whether this deep-rooted desire to imitate is an instinct, or whether it has become embedded in man by a long process of social selection. It is a fact that this desire does exist;<sup>2</sup> and the attempt here is to build up a structure composed of man's efforts to satisfy this desire.<sup>3</sup> Much has been written on what may be called the

<sup>1</sup> Groos, "The Play of Man," p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> Chambers, *Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, p. 660.

<sup>3</sup> "The Drama owes its origin to that principle of imitation which is inherent in human nature. Hence its invention, like that of painting, sculpture, and the other imitative arts, cannot properly be restricted to any one specific age or people. Scenical representations are found to have existed among various nations, so totally separated, by situation and circumstances, as to make it impossible for any one to have borrowed the idea from another. In Greece and Hindostan the Dramatic art was at the same period in high



*conscious drama*, that is, the results which came about after man's feelings had become so refined that he could express them in the form of a definite play. Before they took this form, that is, before these dramatic feelings of man developed to demand the real play with a well-developed plot, there was a time when the expressions of these desires to imitate were very crude. They appeared, the world over, in the religious rites and ceremonies of people who were living on a very low stage of civilization. In other words, the savage man gratified his desire, which to-day among civilized peoples is satisfied by the well-developed plays of the theatre, by acting in his rough and awkward way the stories of his everyday life and the myths and legends which had been passed on to him by his forefathers. This may be called the *unconscious*

repute and perfection, whilst Arabia and Persia, the intervening countries, were utter strangers to this kind of entertainment. The Chinese again have for ages possessed a regular national theatre. The ancient Peruvians had their tragedies, comedies, and interludes; and even among the savage and solitary islanders of the South Sea, a rude kind of play was observed by the navigators who discovered them. Each of these peoples must have invented the Drama for themselves. The only point of connection was the sameness of the cause, which led to these several independent inventions, — the instinctive propensity to imitation, and the pleasure arising from it when successfully exerted." This is a very good example of parallelism. Buckham, "Theatre of the Greeks," p. 99.

*drama* of the savages. It is the intention here to treat primarily of these rites and ceremonies, to examine the facts which have been collected by the ethnographers, so that the drama existent among primitive peoples may be better understood, and thus to draw back another fold of the curtain which conceals so many of the origins of the civilized institutions.

There is a twofold purpose to this imitation characteristic of savage peoples. The first and simplest is that it gives a pleasurable sensation similar to the real experience, and thus appeals to the animal in man. And, second, it enables man to convey his impressions to others — i.e. it is a form of language. As it is in this latter phase that the drama has its real origin, it is necessary that a brief outline be given of the way in which imitative language itself developed.

One of the first means which men used to communicate with each other was the gesture,<sup>1</sup> at first direct and simple, whereby a person could make his thoughts known to those about him. A man, for example, wished to convey to his friend the story of a hunt, or tell him of the

<sup>1</sup> W. D. Whitney, in "Language and the Study of Language," says, "It is past all reasonable question that, in the earliest communication between human beings, gesture long played considerable, if not the principal part." 142

everyday things of life; but, because of his lack of adequate speech, he was obliged to act out the various occurrences, supplementing the action wherever possible with the cries of the animals, or with the few simple words which he knew.

At this period of his history, man was just beginning to have ideas which raised him above the sphere of the lower animals. His wants and satisfactions were of the simplest kind, and he had little need of a more complex means of communication.<sup>1</sup> As population increased, as men began to live in larger groups, and as their wants became more numerous and complicated, there developed a more satisfactory means of conveying ideas. ; The gestures still used came to be much more derived and complex. Little by little there developed, where conditions were favorable, a definite sign language which could give expression even to abstract thoughts. "The nearest approach to such action that is now possible, is where two people, wholly ignorant of one another's speech, meet and need to communicate — an imperfect correspondence, because each is trained to habits of expression, and works

<sup>1</sup> Peter Giles, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, under heading "Philology." Professor Sayce of Oxford says in this connection, "Man is man by virtue of language and it was gestures which first made language possible." "Development of Language," Vol. I, p. 106.

consciously, and with the advantage of long experience towards making himself understood. Yet it is good for its main purpose. What they do to reach mutual comprehension is like what the first speechless man, unconsciously and infinitely more slowly, learned to do; face, hands, body, voice, are all put to use.”<sup>1</sup>

Even to-day among some savage peoples their spoken language is so very meagre that without their gestures it would sometimes be impossible to know of what they were speaking.<sup>2</sup> The following authoritative instances taken at random will tend to illustrate this point. “The Zuñi Indians require much facial contortion and bodily gesticulation in order to make their sentences perfectly intelligible.”<sup>3</sup> “The language of the Bushmen needs so many signs to eke out its meaning that they are unintelligible in the dark, and the Arapahoes can hardly converse with one another if no light is present.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peter Giles in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, under heading “Philology.”

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Lubbock says, “Even the lowest races of which we have any account possess a language, imperfect though it may be, and eked out to a great extent by signs.” “Origin of Civilization,” p. 275.

<sup>3</sup> Spencer, “Principles of Sociology,” Vol. I, p. 136, quoting Pop. S. M., 1876, p. 580; Burton, “City of the Saints,” p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> Lubbock, “Origin of Civilization,” p. 277.

The same holds true of the Pygmies of Africa.<sup>1</sup> In speaking of the Tasmanians, Dr. Milligan says, "They use signs to eke out the meaning of monosyllabic expressions, and to give force, precision, and character to vocal sounds." Spix and Martius,<sup>2</sup> in describing some of the low Brazilian tribes, say that they complete by signs the meaning of their scanty sentences.

The best example to-day of the sign language is to be found among the Plains Indians of North America. It was developed by them under the demands of a peculiar situation. Tribes prone to wander widely, yet speaking a variety of mutually unintelligible dialects, had need of a common means of communication. When, with the nomadic tendency heightened and strengthened by the use of the horse, this need arose, the Indian reverted unconsciously to an earlier stage of the art of thought-transference, there to develop the unique language of the Plains.<sup>3</sup> Much of the history of these tribes has been recounted to the white man by the sign language, and many of the early treaties

<sup>1</sup> H. H. Johnston, "Uganda," Vol. II, p. 536.

<sup>2</sup> Spix and Martius, "Reise in Brasilien," 1823, Vol. I, p. 385.

<sup>3</sup> W. P. Clark, "The Indian Sign Language," p. 15.

between the colonists and the Indians were drawn up through its medium.

Thus it was that even in the very early history of the race the first element of the drama, namely, imitation, appeared, and the purpose of such imitation was to express those ideas which could not be conveyed by any other means at the command of the savage mind.<sup>1</sup>

In this connection Miss Harrison says, "When the men return from the war, the hunt, the journey, and *reenact* their doings, they are at first undoubtedly representing a particular action that actually has taken place. Their drama is history, or at least narrative; they say, in effect, that such and such a thing did happen in the past. Everything with the savage begins in this particular way. But it is easy to see that, if the dramatic commemoration be often repeated, the action tends to cut itself loose from the particular in which it arose and become generalized, abstracted, as it were. The particular hunt, journey, battle, is in the lapse of time

<sup>1</sup> Major-Gen. H. L. Scott, an eminent authority on sign language, in answer to the question, "Was the drama an outgrowth of this early gesture language?" said, "This pantomime was the effort to express thought and convey meaning by the Imitation of Actions, Qualities or Attributes by gesture movements, and there is no doubt whatever in my mind that this was the beginning of the drama."

forgotten or supplanted by a succession of similar hunts, journeys, battles, and the dance comes to commemorate and embody hunting, journeying, fighting. Like children they play not at a funeral but at 'funerals,' 'births,' 'battles,' what not. To put it grammatically, the singular comes first, but the singular gets you no further. The plural detaches you from the single concrete fact; and all the world over, the plural, the neuter plural, as we call it, begets the abstract. Moreover, the time is no longer particular; it is undefined, not what happened, but what happens. Such a dance generalized, universalized, is material for the next stage, the dance pre-done."<sup>1</sup>

It is a commonplace, as we have seen — though the bearing of commonplaces is not always appreciated — that the normal child is forever living in a world created by his own imagination, filled with personages about whom he has heard.<sup>2</sup> He talks and plays with these imaginary people as though they were real. There can be but little difference between the mental processes of such a child and those of the savage who conceives that the world about him is filled

<sup>1</sup> Harrison, "Themis," p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> B. Matthews, "The Development of the Drama," pp. 8 ff.

with a multitude of spirits who are forever seeking to do him harm. The chief difference lies in the fact that the savage has a serious purpose in his make-believe, while the child is merely enjoying himself in satisfying his imitative desire.

As the mind of man becomes more fully developed and as he has time to think of other things than the mere creature wants, his attention is turned to such questions as his own origin, and that of many of the things with which he is surrounded. As there are no written records to give him facts, and as he has not enough scientific knowledge to give him the power of accurate reasoning, his imagination is given full play. The result is the creation of numerous myths and legends dealing with all such phenomena. These are intimately bound up with his religion, and hence a sketch of his beliefs is necessary as forming the basis for the major portion of this book.

The savage has peopled the world about him with a host of spirits. They occupy not only the air, but also every animate and inanimate object. According to his way of thinking, most of them are naturally unfriendly and are seeking by all possible means to do him an injury. Hence



it is only natural that he should try to keep in their good graces and thus ward off much harm which would otherwise come to him.

Herbert Spencer has so carefully worked out this portion of the subject in his "Principles of Sociology"<sup>1</sup> that it would be merely repetition to go over the ground again and show how the religious idea first dawned on the savage mind. But several of the aspects of primitive religious belief, bearing vitally upon the subject in hand, may be recalled.

To the primitive peoples, the idea of motion and life are very intimately associated. They observe that when a man dies, the power of movement which he possessed during life ceases, and they reason that it has gone away with the spirit. Hence it must have been the spirit which caused the motion. But there is movement also in a plant blown by the wind, and in a flowing river; consequently these must have spirits as well. Gradually the primitive man gets the idea that all animate and inanimate objects have spirits. This is only one step removed from the belief that many of the spirits of the dead pass into the trees, the rivers, and

<sup>1</sup> Chs. XIII, XIV, Vol. I, part 1. Also E. B. Tylor, "Anthropology," Ch. XIV.

the stones. With these spirits of the dead about him on all sides, the savage trembles for his safety. When an enemy was alive he could be seen and dealt with accordingly, but after death the enemy's invisible spirit could wreak vengeance, and there would be no redress. He conceived of this vast horde of beings as always ready to do him an injury and believed that he could escape only by the performance of the strictest rites and ceremonies in their behalf. As time went on, the demands of the spirits in this respect became so exacting that the ordinary man could not possibly attend to the elaborate ritual. Hence, there developed a priestly class whose time was completely absorbed in communication with the souls of the dead. Such priests were the connecting link between man and his unseen oppressors. They could coerce the gods into granting things to man. If a member of a tribe desired some special favor from the spirits, he would have recourse to the priest or medicine man, whom he would ask how he might obtain the desired gift, or else ask that an appeal be made directly to the gods in his behalf. In the latter case the priests became the chief actors in the religious dramas of petition.

In order to carry on all such intercourse with the spirit world, it was necessary that a language known to the dwellers in this world and in the next should be employed. Inasmuch as the members of the spirit world at one time occupied this earth, and, though departed, remained anthropomorphic, the savage man thought that requests must be addressed to them in a language which they would understand. Having actually lived at a time when the spoken language was meagre, the dead had communicated with each other much by means of signs and gestures. Hence the desires of man should now be presented to them in the same terms. This is one reason why the savage, when he wants the gods or spirits to do something in his behalf, proceeds to dramatize (act out) his request, that is, to give a rehearsal of a hoped-for performance. When rain is wanted for the crops, a man will climb a tree, and out of a bucket pour a large amount of water on the ground, thus symbolizing the falling of the rain. Before going out on a hunt, he will go through the motions of killing the animal with the hope that the gods will see his actions and grant him success. If a man has an enemy whom he wishes to injure, he will make a small clay or wax

image of him and fill this with nails, trusting that the actual body of the person will thus be filled with pain. This is known as imitative or sympathetic magic.<sup>1</sup> "Led astray by his ignorance of the true causes of things, primitive man believed that in order to produce the great phenomena of nature on which his life depended, he had only to imitate them, and that immediately, by a secret sympathy or mystic influence, the little drama which he acted in forest glade or mountain dell, on desert plain or wind-swept shore, would be taken up and repeated by mightier actors on a vaster stage."<sup>2</sup>

Thus we see that sympathetic magic forms the basis of a large part of the serious savage drama. It makes little difference what the savage wants, whether it be rain, food, or sunshine, he feels that he can obtain it best by acting out his desires.

Among most peoples, when a boy reaches the

<sup>1</sup> Henry's *Travels Among the Northern and Western Indies*, quoted by Rev. Jedediah Morse, *Report to the Secretary of War of the U. S.* (New Haven, 1822), Appendix, p. 102; Peter Jones, *History of Ojibway Indians*, p. 146; W. H. Keating, "Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River, (London, 1825), Vol. II, p. 159. This is common in some form among practically all peoples of the world. Theocritus, *Dialog. II*, 110.

<sup>2</sup> Frazer, "Golden Bough," Vol. II, p. 110; Barnett, "The Greek Drama," pp. 2-3.

age of puberty, the time has arrived when he should be taught the early history of his people. In the absence of records or texts certain of the older members of the totem, into which he is to be initiated, undertake his training. At the time when the spoken language was very limited, these legends of the past were acted out, and they became so impressed upon the mind of the youth that he never forgot them. The ritual and ceremony with which they were acted among some peoples extended over years, until each stage from the very beginning had been portrayed. As the spoken language became more efficient, it came to be the custom for an older man to stand beside the boy and explain carefully the significance of each movement of the actors. This is true even now in Australia, where a well-developed initiatory drama takes place, and here the interpretation includes not only the acting, but also the lines and music. Among the native Australians, practically the whole educational training of the youth is obtained through these plays. As will be shown later on, he is taught to hunt and fish through the graphic representations of certain hunting and fishing expeditions, although in these lines his most effective training comes through the

actual hunting and fishing trips. The moral standards of the tribe are made clear to him by the acting out of those things which he should or more particularly what he should not do, and, as has been said, his historical education is obtained through the plays which picture for him the past.<sup>1</sup>

These totem ceremonies have another important function besides that of teaching the boys. In many other countries besides Australia the animal used as a totem by one group forms the food of another. And although the members of a group are not allowed to eat their own totem animal, they are expected to preserve a supply of that animal in the country.<sup>2</sup> This they attempt to do by means of the sympathetic magic ceremonies, which, while being performed, serve the double purpose of teaching the boys and increasing the amount of food. If there happens to be a time in Australia when there are no initiation ceremonies being performed,

<sup>1</sup> G. F. S. Elliott, "Romance of Savage Life," p. 228. "Most native dances and songs are intended to point a moral or to be of the nature of a sermon. There is no history, geography or scientific literature amongst savages, so that dance and song are often tribal records or, indeed, of the nature of tracts."

<sup>2</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," p. 149.

and if the food supply is low, the totem plays are enacted merely with the hope that the animals will increase.<sup>1</sup>

The life of most savages is a continual struggle not only with nature, but also with men. The religious sympathetic magic ceremonies, which have been mentioned, shows his means of trying to overcome the unfavorable forces in the unseen world. In order to vanquish hostile man, he employs his war dances or plays. According to his way of thinking, these perform a double service. The first, again, is that of sympathetic magic. By acting out the process which they hope to use in exterminating their enemies, they are not only asking the assistance of the gods, but are beseeching them to employ such means to accomplish the result. The second purpose is to work the actors up to the highest pitch of excitement so that they will be able to rush into battle and display their greatest bravery in the face of danger. Of all the serious savage dramatic ceremonies this one alone directly produces concrete results. Warriors do indeed reach such a state, induced through these violent war dances, that they fight as though they were possessed of a supernatural spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," p. 167.

Enough has been said, perhaps, to establish the fact that the drama plays an important part in the life of all savage peoples, and that there is hardly an incident of any importance which has not its dramatic ceremony. The desire to imitate is so deeply rooted in man that a considerable portion of his time is employed in satisfying this "instinct." Even at the very beginnings of human development, we find little dramas already well established. These primitive men had something to say, ideas to express, which, without the drama, would have been held back because their range of expression was otherwise so meagre. The dramatic desire asserted itself, and thus a broad field of expression was opened up. The character and form of these unconscious savage dramas depend entirely upon the part of the world in which they are performed. No matter whence the examples are taken, whether from the Eskimos of the north, or the Bushmen of the south, the same fundamental elements always appear. The ceremonies are usually performed for approximately the same reasons, and their number varies according as the belief in spirits is strong or weak, and as the struggle for existence is hard or easy.



In the following pages there will be brought out more clearly by means of examples the predominant part which the drama plays in the less developed societies. It will then be seen that, instead of being merely a means of enjoyment, as in so many civilized communities, it has also more vital purposes to fulfill. Nearly every man and many women in a savage tribe have their special parts to take in the ceremonies, and to them the performance holds an important place in the struggle for existence. By collecting illustrations from all over the world and on all stages of early development, the simplest beginnings of a history of the drama may be supplied. We shall then be able to show that in the essentials of his drama the savage is not so far behind the more civilized man as has been thought. The same elements appear not only in this early drama but also in the drama of the Greeks and of the people of the Middle Ages. Then may we say that one more institution of society, among those which hold a prominent place among civilized peoples of to-day, has had its origin and early development among the primitive peoples scattered throughout the world.



*CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH  
THE ANIMAL FOOD*



## CHAPTER II

### *CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE ANIMAL FOOD*

**A**S a rule, the savage man is living on a very low scale of subsistence and his stock of capital is exceedingly small. Hence it takes only the slightest misfortune to deprive him of nearly all that he possesses. His tools and weapons are so crude that he is forced to work hard in order that he may support himself. His food consists of the animals which he can kill, the fish obtained from the waters near him, the wild vegetation of the forests, and, in some few cases, of the small products of his own agricultural efforts. However, the animal food is for him the more important, for he has learned to kill where he has not learned to plant. The product of hunting is immediate success, while in agriculture, months pass before he can reap the reward of his labor. The wild roots, berries, and fruits which he can collect afford him neither the same nourishment nor physical satisfaction which he can get from

meat. Of course, there are exceptions to this, as we shall see later on. Another reason why he was slow in developing agriculture was the fact that during the period of growth of the crops he had to obtain food and this quest carried him over such a wide area of land that it was impossible for him to tend and defend his crops. It was to the women who were obliged to stay within a smaller area that we owe, in all probability, the development of agriculture.<sup>1</sup> But hunting is at times precarious and unsatisfactory for the savage man. If he is living in a country such as Australia, where nearly all of his subsistence is obtained through hunting, and if, for some reason, the animals become scarce, there are several courses open to him out of his difficulty; starvation, migration, use of other foods than those to which he has become accustomed, invention or discovery of some new means of livelihood, or an appeal to the gods and spirits of the animals and of the hunt, whereby, he believes, the animals may be made to return.

The instinct of self-preservation is so strong in savage man that he will not starve to death if he can help it. Migration for any great

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Herbertson, "Man and His Work," p. 59.

distance from his present home is not normal, for he is inert, and anything requiring change and enterprise means pain. To stay where he is and try to get sustenance through an appeal to the gods and spirits is the course requiring the least exertion. And so at first he is impelled to take recourse to some religious expedient, and it is only after repeated failure that he is led to adopt one of the other courses. It is with a study of the ceremonies connected with the animal food supply that we shall now begin the practical illustrations of the primitive drama, because these ceremonies are fundamental in the life of nearly all savage peoples.

In those countries, such as Australia and America, where the totem forms an important part in the religious and social life, the number of dramatic ceremonies is far greater than where the totem does not appear at all, or where it is of minor importance. The totems may be divided into two main classes: (1) the animal and plant, and (2) the natural elements, such as the rain and the sun. Every man belongs to one of these classes. In sections of the country where animals form an important part of the food supply, animal totems are predominant. Those who belong to them are expected con-

tinually to perform rites in order that the food supply may not fail.<sup>1</sup> Where agriculture is chiefly depended upon for sustenance, the sun and rain totems play the leading rôles. In fact, it would be possible to determine the stage of civilization upon which any primitive people were living if their food rites were known. As has already been indicated, the appeals are made to the gods and spirits through sympathetic magic; hence all of the ceremonies are of a mimetic character. Few people, regardless of their stage of development, picture in their theatre as much of nature as do the savages. Nearly everything that these aborigines portray deals with the matters of every day, so that in acting their plays, which have to do with the animal food supply, they feel that they are performing as real and important a function as though they actually went out and obtained food.

As is the case in the modern drama, in the majority of the ceremonies there is one actor who takes the leading rôle. In tribes where the totem groups either do not appear at all,

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "The Northern Tribes of Central Australia," pp. 327, 149; "Native Tribes of Central Australia," pp. 167, 169, 211; Lang, "Myth, Ritual, and Religion," Vol. I, pp. 65-66, 70; Webster, "Primitive Secret Societies," p. 161.



or do not form an important element, this part is taken by the medicine man, who is supposed to be in constant communication with the gods and spirits. Among the Australians, where the totem idea is dominant, the head man of each group assumes the leading character; for it is he who, through long experience is able to foresee just what the spirits of the animals demand in order that they may be so propitiated or coerced that they will appear. The minor rôles are taken by the other members of the tribe, or totem group, as the case may be.

In all of these ceremonies dealing with the animal food supply the women of the group play either a very minor part or none at all. This may be due to the religious idea that women are unclean and hence are not allowed to play an important part in the dealings of man with the spirit world. However true this may be, in these particular cases of the animal ceremonies there seems to be another and more logical reason. These dramatic religious ceremonies are the direct outgrowth of the tales of the day's hunt told around the camp-fire after an expedition. As the men and not the women were the ones who did the hunting, they of necessity took the various rôles when the reli-

gious element entered in and these hunt stories became ceremonials.

In all of these plays the actors have been drilled in their parts from boyhood, so that they are able to reproduce the ceremony on any occasion without a change. It must not be forgotten that the rite has to be performed correctly, under penalty of ineffectiveness or worse. When it is remembered that the play has not been written down, and that the performers are obliged to keep in mind not only the exact action, but also the lines, songs, and music for a performance extending at times over several days, it will be seen that, in some respects, the mental capacity of the savage is not as limited as many persons are led to suppose.<sup>1</sup>

The holding of these ceremonies depends upon the season of the year. Many are associated with the breeding of animals, or the flowering of the plants, so that they must be performed within a well-defined period. In Central Australia there is a dry season, often of great length, and a wet one of shorter duration and of irregular occurrence. The latter is marked by an

<sup>1</sup> Among the Maoris if a spell is recited in an incorrect manner (even to the dropping of a single word) it is believed to bring death upon the user. E. Tregear, "The Maori Race," p. 451.

increase of animal and plant life which turns a veritable desert into a fruitful garden. It is just at the beginning of the wet season that the totem ceremonies are held, and for this reason they are always successful in bringing an abundant supply of food. At times of great drought, those who belong to the rain or water totem will hold a ceremony to bring the necessary moisture. If rain soon follows, they claim to have been successful, but if they fail, some distant group of men have wrought a counter influence.<sup>1</sup>

We have here a very good example of how a clever medicine man is able to hold his power over his more ignorant and superstitious fellow-tribesmen. He learns by a careful study of weather conditions when a storm is due and then holds a ceremony to bring the rain. When the rain comes he claims the honor of having brought it. If animals are needed for food, he discovers through scouts or other agencies where they are likely to be found and then has a ceremony performed, telling the people that by intercession with the gods through the mystic sympathetic magic rites the deities have been persuaded to grant his requests. The people be-

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," pp. 169-170.

lieve him and honor him for being such a holy man and are willing to grant him anything which he asks in return for his favors. Should he, however, fail repeatedly, it is very likely that he will be deposed from office as having lost his close connection with the spirit world.

Not all savage peoples have dramatic ceremonies connected with the animal food supply. The Eskimos of the far north, for example, have but few ceremonies and this is probably due to their limited worship of the spirit of the animals, and to the scarcity of totem groups. Their life is so hard that they have little leisure time, and their houses are so small that they have no extra space to give plays. The amusement of these people takes the form of story telling, of which there will be more to say later.

But this does not mean that they are lacking in the power to imitate which was shown to be the basis of the drama. Imitation is called for by the very conditions of the case in hunting. The Eskimos dress in the skins of animals and mimic their actions, their skill in so doing really constituting a superiority in the chase. Thus the ability to impersonate becomes a vital element in self-maintenance and impinges upon the most primordial class of the *mores*. By means

of this action a man can get very near to a seal by flopping along on the ice as he has seen the animals do.<sup>1</sup> If he wishes to kill a polar bear he imitates the seal upon which the bear feeds and thereby entices it within gunshot.<sup>2</sup> Among the Plains-Cree if individual hunters wished to obtain the buffalo they adopted the following means: one Indian disguising himself as a buffalo by means of a big robe would get on all fours and, imitating a calf, begin to bleat pitiably. The other Indians, wrapped in a white blanket to look like a wolf, pretended to attack him. The buffalo would come up to the succor of the supposed calf, and the hunters could then shoot those that they wanted.<sup>3</sup> This dramatic means of getting food is very widespread over the world and occurs not only in America, but also in Australia<sup>4</sup> and Africa.<sup>5</sup>

The type of ceremonies which are here to be described falls under two heads: first, where only the animals come on the stage, and second,

<sup>1</sup> George Borup, Lecture.

<sup>2</sup> H. H. Bancroft, "Native Races of the Pacific States," Vol. I, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> A. Skinner, "Political Organization, Cults and Ceremonies of the Plains-Ojibway and Plains-Cree Indians," Report Am. Mus. of Nat. Hist., Vol. XI, Part VI, 1914, p. 528.

<sup>4</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Ratzel, "History of Mankind," Vol. II, p. 274.

where both man and the animals appear. Both of these have the sympathetic magic basis in that they act out for the gods to see and imitate those things which the savage wishes to happen; but the second is a higher dramatic type than the first, for we perceive man with his plans for overcoming his prey and the accomplishing of his desire.

In the first or lower type we observe the animals living in their haunts with no apparent purpose to their actions. It is hardly possible to determine which appeared chronologically first in the history of dramatic art, for both of them occur in neighboring tribes who seem to be at about the same stage of development. For our purpose here it is only necessary to note that the second is merely the first with the addition of man. Of course, it is possible to develop a plot with only the animals, and we see one example of this coming from New Britain, but as a rule among savage peoples, there is not even the smallest vestige of purposeful action until the human element appears. Even then it is a long time before the plays have more than a single simple incident.

As illustrating the first head we find that the Tasmanians had many dances which imitated

the movements of animals. In the Kangaroo dance the men jumped or hopped around as they had seen the animal do. "In the Emu Dance the men went slowly around the fire, throwing their arms about to imitate the motions of the head of the animals while feeding. One hand behind would alternate with the other in front, coming to the ground and then rising above the head."<sup>1</sup> The people of the Prince of Wales Island hold what is known as the Crab Dance, in which a man assumes a crouching attitude with the upper arms horizontal and the fore-arms vertical.<sup>2</sup> In New Britain the Hornbill Dance is strictly of totemic origin. A man comes forth dressed as the female bird, whose walk and other movements he mimics in every detail. After looking around for some time for her mate she at last finds him and they dance together.<sup>3</sup>

The love dance forms quite an important part in savage life and it appears among many animals. In this dance among the people of New Britain a myth of the totemic past is acted out and the men taking part go through the

<sup>1</sup> Bonwick, "Daily Life of the Tasmanians," p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> A. C. Haddon, "Head Hunters," pp. 188-9.

<sup>3</sup> B. Pullen-Burry, "In a German Colony," pp. 204 ff.

actions as though they were real birds. It is very probable that the idea which they have in mind is that by acting out the love dance the birds may do likewise and thus the number of young will be increased. In all of these we go back to the religious basis of sympathetic magic.

Each group, in a primitive society which has an animal for its totem, goes through dramatic rites at various times of the year, similar to those described above. The sympathetic magic idea is dominant, although the exact form which the ceremony takes varies with the totem. It is perfectly clear that there is in each of these cases the simplest dramatic action. They are merely incidents of everyday life with no definite plot. The story of a hunt or the development of an insect from its earliest stages through the process of metamorphosis till it finally emerges full grown, are faithfully reproduced by the actors. They are the thoughts of a simple mind told in a simple way. It is not until one reaches a fairly high stage of savagery that there begins to appear a very much more elaborate production.

In a ceremony connected with the Witchetty Grub Totem of Australia, the principal performer takes the part of the insect. While sitting on



the ground he gives an imitation of flying by waving his arms and bending his body forward and backward. He is supposed to be hovering over a bush as does the insect before it lays its eggs. Later the performer wriggles, imitating the fluttering of the insect when it first leaves its chrysalis case in the ground and attempts to fly.<sup>1</sup>

A large part of the Witchetty Grub Totem ceremony is not performed in the camp but out on the hills, away from the gaze of the uninitiated, for it is thought that if the women and children should gaze on certain secret portions of the ceremony the efficacy of the entire performance would be lost. Late in the afternoon the few men who are to take part steal away from the camp so that no one will know where they have gone, and march in single file up into the mountains, where they spend the night. Early the next morning they start out again, each man carrying in his hand a twig, the leader, however, having a small wooden trough. The path which they take is the historic one followed by the great leader of the Witchetty Grubs in the remote past. Finally they reach a small cave in which is a large block of quartzite surrounded by small

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," p. 180.

round stones. The large stone represents the adult animal. The leader begins to sing and to tap it with his trough, while the other men tap it with their twigs and join in the songs, the burden of which is an invitation to the animal to lay eggs. After this ceremony has been continued for a short time, attention is turned to the small stones, which represent the eggs. Soon, however, the men move on to another big rock, supposed to have been closely connected with their mythical ancestor. This they continue to tap while singing a song which consists of an invitation to the animals to come from all directions and lay eggs. Several other similar ceremonies are performed before steps are retraced to the home camp, where the last act is to be carried out.

While these men have been away, an old man of the totem, left in the camp, has built a long narrow house, which is intended to represent the chrysalis case, from which the fully developed insect emerges. As the camp comes into view, the actors stop and decorate themselves, painting on their body with red ochre and pipe clay the design of the totem. Coming along slowly in single file, they at length reach the chrysalis, which they enter. When all are inside they be-

gin to sing of the witchetty insect in its various stages. The music continues for a while and then, one by one, they shuffle out in a squatting posture, in imitation of the insect emerging from the chrysalis. The rest of the evening is taken up with singing songs of the Witchetty Grub.<sup>1</sup>

In Zambezia a belief is held that the spirits of the dead are able to return and watch over their surviving relations in animal form. It frequently happens that one family will be unwilling to kill beasts of one kind for fear of hurting the spirits in them, and another group will hesitate before killing those of another species. This belief is particularly strong among the Wa-Tonga of the Barne, who still perform animal dances in which they imitate the voices and movements of those forms in which they think the spirits of their dead relatives may be sheltered.<sup>2</sup>

Turning now to the ceremonies under the second head, where both man and animals appear, we see that among the Kosa Kaffirs, before a hunting expedition goes forth, a dramatic rite

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," pp. 170 ff.; Haddon, "Magic and Fetishism," p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> R. C. F. Mangham, "Zambezia," p. 359.

is performed which they consider absolutely essential for the success of the undertaking. One of the men puts a handful of grass into his mouth and then crawls around on all fours to represent the animal. The rest of the party chase him as though they would drive their spears through him, giving their hunting cry all the time. Finally the animal actor falls upon the ground as if dead. If this man afterward kills any game, he can keep the claw, which he hangs as a trophy on his arm, but the animal must be shared with the rest.<sup>1</sup>

“Among the Mandan Indians, when the hunters failed to find the buffaloes on which the tribe depended for food, every man brought out of his lodge the mask of a buffalo’s head and horns, with the tail hanging down behind, which he kept for such an emergency, and they all set to ‘dance buffalo.’ Ten or fifteen masked dancers at a time formed the ring, drumming and rattling, chanting and yelling; when one was tired out he went through the pantomime of being shot with bow and arrow, skinned, and cut up; while another, who stood ready with his buffalo head on, took his place in the dance. So it would go on, without stopping day or

<sup>1</sup> J. Lubbock, “Origin of Civilization,” p. 185.

night, sometimes for two or three weeks, till at last these persevering efforts to bring the buffalo succeeded, and a herd came in sight on the prairie.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the totem plays in Australia represents the chopping of an opossum out of a hollow log. The hunter, who is the chief singer and actor and who is assisted by other men, enters singing his hunting song, and, while looking around for the animal, finally discovers it in the log. After several ineffectual attempts to dislodge it with a pole, they have recourse to a fire, by which they hope to smoke it out. The result is that the animal is forced to escape and, while trying to reach the brush, is caught and killed. Not only the words of the song, but also the pantomimic dancing which accompanies the whole performance add greatly to the vividness of the scene.<sup>2</sup>

In some parts of Australia this ceremony of the opossum totem is performed in a little different manner from that described above. An old man, who is characterized by his leaning on

<sup>1</sup> Tylor, "Anthropology," pp. 296-7; Cushing, "Zuñi Folk Tales," p. xiv. Introduction; Catlin, "Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institute," 1885, Part II, pp. 309 ff.; H. Webster, "Primitive Secret Societies," p. 384 note.

<sup>2</sup> Howitt, "Native Tribes of Southeast Australia," pp. 423-4.

a staff, goes out on a hunt for food. Finding an animal in a hollow log, he starts to chop it out, but his labors are interrupted by men taking the part of opossums. These have been hiding in the near-by brush. One quietly crawls out and gives the bare leg of the old man a scratch. He appears to be very much frightened to judge by the yell he gives and the caper he cuts as he turns to hit his annoyer with his stick. The animal dodges him and, running on all fours, lies down at the edge of the stage. The work has hardly started again on the log when a second opossum comes out and bites the leg. The man yells as he strikes the animal with his stick. So the performance goes on until all of the opossum-men are lying down by the edge of the stage. The old man then rushes over to them, shouts the word for "opossum," and leads the company in a dance around the fire.<sup>1</sup>

The Indians of New Spain often hold a dance which is a representation of the hunting of wild beasts. When they begin the dance, they talk to each other as though they were playing in a comedy, concerning the animals which they are about to hunt. The men are disguised as beasts by wearing the skins of mountain lions,

<sup>1</sup> Howitt, "Native Tribes of Southeast Australia," p. 545.

jaguars, or wolves; others wear head coverings made from the head of an animal or from that of the eagle or other bird of prey. They carry in their hands pointed sticks, swords and hatchets, with which they threaten to kill the beasts which they pursue. At times it is a man who flees, as if he were being attacked by wild animals in the desert. The man who takes this rôle must be very agile and fleet of foot, hitting here and there as he runs away from the beasts that pursue him. At last the animals overtake him and pretend to devour him.<sup>1</sup>

The stage setting for some of these *corroborees*, or dramatic representations, is often very striking. A large smooth piece of ground is chosen for the stage; poles are set up with huge sheets of bark, usually painted with totemic designs, fastened between them. At one side is a large imitation of an alligator or some other animal, made of logs plastered over with mud and painted with stripes of various colors. A piece of wood cut open and stuck in at one end serves for a gaping mouth. At the back and at each side of the stage are fires which serve as footlights. In a large semicircle in front, the women, who act as the orchestra, are seated.

<sup>1</sup> Magnin, "Les Origines du Théâtre Moderne," pp. 44-5.

The music is made by beating time on a rolled-up opossum rug and by striking two boomerangs together. The time is faultless. Although the tunes are monotonous, they are rhythmical and musical, and seem curiously well suited to the stage and the players. "These latter have a very weird look as they steal out of the thick scrub, out of the darkness, quickly one after another, dancing around the stage in time to the music, their grotesquely painted figures and feather-decorated heads lit up by the flickering lights of the fires. As the dancing gets faster, the singing gets louder, every muscle of the dancers seems strained, and the wonder is that the voices do not crack. Just as you think they must, the dancing slows again, the voices die away, to swell out once more with renewed vigor when the fires are built up again and again; the same dance is gone through time after time — one night one dance, or for that matter, many nights one dance." <sup>1</sup>

In the plays of savage man one point to be noticed is, that in the details they are true to life. If one had merely an accurate description of the savage drama it would be possible to

<sup>1</sup> K. L. Parker, "The Euahlayi Tribe," pp. 122-3; Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," p. 178.



draw a picture of their life, although no other details but those appearing in the drama might be at hand. The kinds of weapons which they use, their methods of fighting and hunting, how they instruct their young, and even many of their religious beliefs are brought out in their dramatic representations. It has been possible to construct a history of Homeric society from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, taking those things which really formed the setting of the poems.<sup>1</sup> So, likewise, if it were necessary, one could obtain a history of the development of savage peoples through the plays which hold so important a place in their lives.

It is often difficult to keep in mind the fact that in many of these seemingly comic plays the religious idea is strong, and that in the performance the men who take part are, for the time being, at least, almost priests of the animals which they are portraying. If these sympathetic magic rites are acceptable to the spirits, the people will be blessed with a more abundant food supply and thus will life be made a little easier in a difficult environment.

The use of masks in the dances and drama of

<sup>1</sup> See Keller, "Homeric Society"; Seymour, "Life in the Homeric Age."

savage peoples is very widespread. For example, in the dances of the natives of Torres Straits, which are held for the purpose of assuring success on a hunting or fishing trip, the most extraordinary masks of tortoise shell are worn. The form of the mask is supposed to have much to do with the success of an undertaking, and so before a hunting trip they will wear only the mask of an animal and before a fishing trip that of a fish.<sup>1</sup>

Among the Eskimos of Behring Strait there is held a more or less dramatic feast, known as the "Inviting In" feast. During the dance which follows, masks are worn,<sup>2</sup> which represent either the totem animal of the maker or some mythical fancy. The object of these faces is to propitiate and do honor to the animal or other being represented by them, with the hope that there will be a plentiful supply of game during the coming year, and that evil influences may be warded off. The spirits of the animals are invited to be present in order that they may enjoy the feast and the dances.

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Nead, "Some Spinning Tops from Torres Straits," 17 J. A. I., p. 87, quoted by Lévy-Brühl in "Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures," p. 275; Haddon, "Head Hunters."

<sup>2</sup> Masks were not the original property of the Eskimos but have been borrowed from the Indians of the Northwest Coast. E. Grosse, "The Beginnings of Art," p. 189.

The historical myth which gave rise to this ceremony is as follows. In early times it was thought that all animate beings had a dual existence, so that at will, they could become either man or animal. If an animal wished to assume its human form, it raised its arm, leg, or wing, and pushed up the muzzle or beak, as if it were a mask. The creature then became manlike in form and features. "This idea is still held, and it is believed that many animals now possess this power. The manlike form thus appearing is called the *inna* and is supposed to represent the thinking part of the creature, and at death becomes its shade."<sup>1</sup>

At this ceremony of the "Inviting In" feast some of the masks worn by the dancers represent the totem animals, and the wearers are believed to become the creature represented, or at least to be endowed with its spiritual essence. In order to carry out the idea of the myth, the masks are made with double faces. "This is done by having the muzzle of the animal fitted over and concealing the face of the *inna* below,

<sup>1</sup> E. W. Hawkes, "The 'Inviting In' Feast of the Alaskan Eskimos," Canadian Geological Survey, Memoir 45, No. 3, Anthropological Series. Bureau of Ethnology Report, 1896-7, Vol. I, pp. 394 ff.; E. W. Nelson, "Eskimo of the Behring Strait."

the outer mask being held in place by pegs so arranged that it can be removed quickly at a certain time in the ceremony, thus symbolizing the transformation. Another style of mask has the under face concealed by a small hinged door on each side, which opens at a proper time in the ceremony, indicating the metamorphosis.<sup>1</sup> When the mask represents a totemic animal, the wearer needs no double face, since he represents in person the shade of the totemic animal. When worn in any ceremonial, either as a totem mask or as representing the shade, the wearer is believed to become mysteriously and unconsciously imbued with the spirit of the being which his mask represents. Still other masks have wooden models of thumbless hands attached to their sides, the palms of the hands being pierced with large circular holes; these are usually found on masks representing birds, beasts, and spirits, having some connection with making game more or less plentiful."<sup>2</sup> Probably the holes indicate that the being will not hold the game but will let it pass through to the earth.

In the Topeng<sup>3</sup> performance of Java, masks

<sup>1</sup> Lang, "Myth, Ritual and Religion," Vol. I, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1896-7, Vol. I, pp. 395 ff.; E. W. Nelson, "Eskimo of the Behring Strait."

<sup>3</sup> *Topeng* means masquerade.

are worn by the players at all times except when they appear before a prince and then they discard them.<sup>1</sup> As we will show later on, the earliest form which we find in Java of the drama is that of the puppets. The same idea is carried out when human beings take the parts, for instead of speaking themselves a man reads the lines and the actors then come out and perform; and by the use of masks they are able to complete the puppet illusion.

In the "Nō" plays of Japan we find a still further reason for the use of masks. "Only men can act, and for the women's parts they wear the conventional masks with the white narrow face and the eyebrows painted high up on the middle of the forehead, which is the classical standard of female beauty. Masks are also worn by those representing demons or ghosts. They are made of carved wood with a slit for the mouth and two holes for the eyes."<sup>2</sup>

It would be interesting at this point to pause and take up the widespread use of masks the world over, but space will only permit of the briefest mention. They are to be found among practically all peoples in the lower stages of

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Wilken, "Volkenkunde," Ch.V.

<sup>2</sup> M. C. Stopes, "Plays of Old Japan — The 'Nō'," p. 14.

civilization and even in so advanced a civilization as that of Greece at the time of the great dramatists they were used by all actors.<sup>1</sup> The purpose, especially among the Greeks, was that the so-called stock characters should not change, and that the voice of the actor should carry better. A god was supposed to have one definite form and the goddess another. Grief was expressed by one mask and joy by another. Not only each person, but also each emotion was expressed by the set face of wood and linen rather than by the actual countenances of the actors.<sup>2</sup> Even to-day in our theatres, while

<sup>1</sup> Masks were sometimes used in the drama of the Middle Ages where a man took a woman's part.

<sup>2</sup> "Masks were generally made of linen. Cork and wood were occasionally used. The mask covered the whole of the head, both in front and behind. Caps were often worn underneath, to serve as a protection. The white of the eye was painted on the mask, but the place for the pupil was left hollow, to enable the actor to see. The expression of the tragic mask was the *onkos*, a cone-shaped prolongation of the upper part of the mask above the forehead, intended to give size and impressiveness to the face, and used where dignity was to be imparted. It varied in size according to the character of the personage. The *onkos* of the tyrant was especially large; that of the women was less than that of the men. A character was not necessarily represented by the same mask throughout the piece. The effects of misfortune or of accident had often to be depicted by a fresh mask. For instance, in the *Helen* of Euripides, Helen returns upon the stage with her hair shorn off, and her cheeks pale with weeping. *Œdipus*, at the end of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, is seen with blinded eyes and blood-stained face. In such case a change of mask must have been necessary. There are a few occasions in the extant

they do not use masks, yet there are typical makeups which serve the same purpose.<sup>1</sup>

The ideas which are current in the mind of the savage in regard to masks are somewhat different from those of the Greeks. We have noticed that the Eskimo thinks that the personality of the individual whom the mask represents passes into the wearer, so that his actions

tragedies where a change of facial expression seems to be demanded by the circumstances, but was rendered impossible by the mask. Thus, in the *Elektra* of Sophocles, the heroine is unable to show her joy at her brother's return, and the poet has to get over this as best he can. He makes Orestes bid her show no signs of joy for fear of arousing suspicion, while she declares there is no risk of this, for hatred of her mother has become too ingrained in her for her expression to change suddenly, and her joy itself will bring tears and not laughter." Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," pp. 244-5.

<sup>1</sup> "The contrast between the ancient and the modern actor is marked by nothing so conspicuously as by the use of masks. These masks, or similar devices, were a regular feature in the old Dionysiac worship, and were probably inherited as such by the tragic stage, and not invented to set purpose. With the growth of tragedy they soon acquired a new character. Thespis, the earliest of the tragic actors, is said at the commencement of his career to have merely painted his face with white lead and purslane. Later on he employed masks; but these were of a very simple character, consisting merely of linen, without paint or coloring. Chœrilus introduced certain improvements which are not specified. Phrynichus set the example of using female masks. Æschylus was the first to employ painted masks, and to portray the features of a dreadful and awe-inspiring character. Though not the inventor of the tragic mask, as some ancient writers assert, he was the first to give it that distinctive character from which in later times it never varied in detail. After the time of Æschylus there is no further mention of any radical alterations or improvements in the manufacture of masks." Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," p. 242.

for the time being are not his own but those of another. If the mask represents a spirit, either a fantastic one of their own imagination or one of a totem animal, the wearer will be imbued with its spiritual essence. At the Greek period of which we have been speaking, no such religious idea was attached to the masks, and they were used merely to heighten the dramatic effect.

Numerous other instances, however, could be added to those already given to emphasize more strongly the fact that there is a widespread geographical distribution of these dramatic ceremonies, connected with the animal food. From the Eskimo of the north to the Bushman of the south, and from the Australian of the east to the American Indian of the west, the imitative desire is forever asserting itself in a very significant manner. With them life is largely taken up with the struggle for existence, hence it is only natural that they should seize upon that which they hope will render them assistance in this fight. For them the dominant motive in all of these ceremonies is religious. Their whole life is so wrapt up with the imaginary environment that they spend a good portion of their time in trying to obtain the favor of the other-



wise unfriendly spirits. These dramatic representations of the things which they desire seem to the savage mind to be eminently fitted to appeal to the spirits. A double purpose is served, for not only are the gods amused by the portrayal, but they are also induced to permit the desired request to be granted. As civilization advances the religious life comes to mean less and less to the people and a very much shorter time is spent in the ritualistic observances. But on the savage stage, where we are making our study, the religious element is forever present in nearly all observances.

We now pass to a consideration of the drama as expressed in the vegetation ceremonies. It was out of such rites as these that the Greek Drama developed; therefore the connection between the savage and the civilized theatre becomes here more apparent.



*CEREMONIES DEALING WITH PLANT  
FOOD*



### CHAPTER III

#### *CEREMONIES DEALING WITH PLANT FOOD*

**W**E have tried to bring out in the last chapter through examples, how important a part the animal food ceremonies play among a vast majority of the savage peoples. This can mean but one thing — that the food of the people is made up largely of meat, and for that reason they are willing to devote so much of their time to the sympathetic magic ceremonies in connection with its procuring. As man moves on from the hunting and cattle raising stages to the agricultural stage we find the animal ceremonies decreasing in number, but not entirely disappearing, for a people, although largely dependent upon the crops for sustenance, still use the animals for food. In the early stages of its development agriculture was looked upon as a woman's occupation,<sup>1</sup> and so for that reason the men had little to do with it. As we said in the last chapter, the women,

<sup>1</sup> Lippert, "Kulturgeschichte," Vol. II, p. 7; A. J. and F. D. Herbertson, "Man and His Work," p. 59.

in order to obtain food while the men were away on the hunt, were obliged to gather the fruits and berries which grew near their camp. If the animals proved scarce and the men came home empty-handed, they were glad to take the food which the women had collected. As time went on, the women learned crude forms of planting and cultivation, and it was not until this stage that we find man's scorn changed to interest. Then it was that the dramatic rites in connection with the obtaining of vegetable food appeared, for men are the principal ones who communicate with the spirit world.

There is, however, an exception to the statement that people who neither sow nor reap have no ceremonies in connection with these, for in Australia, although the people have no idea of sowing or reaping,<sup>1</sup> yet they perform a few plant totem ceremonies. When these are enacted, the object is somewhat different from that seen in similar rites in other parts of the

<sup>1</sup> A. J. and F. D. Herbertson, "Man and His Work," p. 59. "The Fuegians, Australians, Bushmen, and many tropical forest tribes have no idea of sowing or reaping. Their notions are limited to gathering such roots and fruits as they have found to be fit for food. Some Australian tribes go so far as to punish the uprooting of plants bearing edible fruits. They have realized the folly of recklessly destroying a permanent source of food, but have not yet thought of attempting to increase it by efforts of their own."

world. There is here a double purpose. The first is, that the plants, which they themselves use for food, may be increased; the second, and the more important one, is that the plants used by the animals for food may be so plentiful that the beasts will neither move to some far distant place nor become so thin as to be unfit for food. In more civilized communities, where the ceremonies are held before the planting of the crops in the spring and at the time of harvest in the fall, the intention is so to appeal to the gods of vegetation that they will support the efforts which have been put forth by man in his endeavor to increase the food supply. In Australia man exerts no effort as far as agriculture is concerned, but still the gods are asked to send an abundance of plants. The rain ceremonies are enacted not only with the hope that plants may be increased for man and the animals, but also that the water holes, from which the supply for drinking is taken, may remain so full that a migration to a new part of the country may not be necessary.

In America, where agriculture among some tribes had reached a fairly high stage of development, there appeared ceremonies in connection with the sun and rain. Two of these,

namely, the Sun Dance of the Plains Indians and the Snake or Rain Dance of the Hopis, are the most famous of all the savage dramas. The all-controlling power of the sun and the rain were very early recognized, and so the growth of their rites occupied an important part in the lives of these people.

One of the commonest types of the rain-making ceremony appears not only among many of the savage peoples, but also in various parts of Europe. A man, who is the rain-maker will go up a tree and sprinkle water on the ground to represent rain. A second will hit two stones together to represent thunder; and a third will strike a fire brand until the sparks fly in representation of lightning. This is as simple a sympathetic magic ceremony as can be found, but it has in it the basic elements of the drama — that is, imitation and action.<sup>1</sup>

Among the savage communities in America and elsewhere, where long periods of drought are likely to destroy the plant food, the "rain-

<sup>1</sup> A ceremony somewhat similar to this is found in Russia, W. Mannhardt, "Antike Wald — und Feldkulte," p. 342 (note); New Britain, R. Parkinson, "Im Bismarck Archipel," p. 143; Omaha Indians, J. O. Dorsey, "Omaha Sociology," Third Report Bureau Ethnology, 1884 (p. 347); Mexico, C. Lumholtz, "Unknown Mexico," Vol. I, pp. 180, 330; Swazi, "Southeast Africa," J. MacDonald, "Religion and Myth," p. 10.



maker" is a very important personage. It usually happens that he is the medicine man of the tribe and that the function of rain-making is merely one of his many duties. However, in places where disastrous droughts are likely to occur to the detriment of the crops and hence to the life of the people, a separate man is appointed for this position. He is held in the highest esteem by all the members of the tribe, for, as they think, it is upon his good will that all prosperity depends. As a rule, when rain is wanted, he goes through a very elaborate dramatic ceremonial with the help of other members of the tribe. Still he does not usually begin until he determines beforehand by observations of weather conditions whether he is likely to meet with success. If he finds that there is no chance of rain he has some very good excuse why at that time he is unable to perform the ceremony. If he sees rain is imminent, he, along with those whom he has chosen to help, represents in a mimetic way the gathering of the clouds and the falling of the water.

In the case of some peoples who have water for their totem, they act out the story of the wanderings of their ancestors, with the hope that the spirits will see their distress and grant relief.

They feel themselves closely allied to the rain, and so for that reason if they are unable to produce it they think that there is something radically wrong. It will sometimes be the cause for a war with another tribe if the drought lasts, and they convince themselves that it has been brought about by a counter influence. As most of the rain ceremonies in Australia are very similar, it is necessary to describe only one. In this, as in nearly all other savage ceremonies, the sympathetic magic idea is dominant.

At the time of a great drought the members of the Dieri tribe come together, and call in loud voices upon the Mura-Muras<sup>1</sup> for the power to make rain, telling them of the impoverished state of the country and the impossibility of getting plant or animal food for the half-starved people. After this prayer, which corresponds roughly to the prologue, the real ceremony begins. A ditch is dug about twelve feet long, two feet deep, and from eight to ten feet wide. Over this they build a conical hut of logs covered with branches. The hut is only large enough to admit the old men, the younger ones being obliged to sit outside. Two men who are supposed to have special in-

<sup>1</sup> Mura-Muras = remote ancestors.

spiration from the Mura-Muras are chosen to have their arms lanced. The operation is performed by an old and influential man with a sharp piece of flint. The blood is made to flow on the men who are seated in the hut. At the same time the two bleeding men throw handfuls of down into the air, part of which sticks to the blood-covered bodies of the old men of the tribe, and the rest floats away. This blood symbolizes the rain; the down symbolizes the clouds. During the ceremony, two large stones are placed inside of the hut to represent gathering clouds and to presage rain. The men, who were bled, carry away the stones to a distance of ten or fifteen miles, where they place them as high as possible in a tall tree. While they are gone the other men are engaged in pulverizing gypsum, which they throw into a water hole. It is hoped that the Mura-Muras will see this and send the rain-bearing clouds. If no clouds appear, it is believed that the Mura-Muras are angry with them; and if no rain occurs for a long time, it is thought that a counter influence is being worked by some other tribe.

The last act of this religious drama consists in destroying the hut. The old and young men rush at it and try to push it down with their

heads. They force their way through to the other side, repeating the process till the hut is completely demolished. They are not allowed to use their hands except in the case of the very heavy logs. "The piercing of the hut with their heads symbolizes the piercing of the clouds; the fall of the hut, the fall of the rain."<sup>1</sup> In this ceremony, as performed among the Dieri, the play is carried on without singing and with very little dancing, but in Queensland these are added. There, after the men have gathered in the hut, they come forth dancing and singing. They go around a small pond which has been dug in front of the hut, mimicking the cries and antics of the various aquatic birds and animals, such as the ducks and frogs. During this part of the ceremony the women of the tribe have been stationed some little distance away. After the men have finished their animal dance, the women march around them in single file, and throw powdered quartz crystals over them. While doing this, the women hold over their heads such things as shields and pieces of bark,

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Howitt, "The Dieri and other Kindred Tribes of South Australia," 20 J. A. I., p. 91; A. W. Howitt, "The Native Tribes of Southeast Australia," pp. 394 ff.; S. Gason, "The Dieyerie Tribe, Native Tribes of South Australia," pp. 276 ff.; R. B. Smyth, "Aborigines of Victoria," Vol. I, pp. 467-8 (note).

pretending that they are sheltering themselves from a heavy shower.<sup>1</sup>

The most famous of all the rain-making ceremonies which take place among savage peoples is that of the Hopi Indians. This has been called the greatest of our surviving religious dramas.<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that the Hopi Indians live in a very arid region, where every drop of rain is needed for their crops; accordingly, each of the seven villages holds a dance every two years, in the belief that it will add to the natural rainfall. These are the noted snake dances, which are of such striking similarity that it will be necessary to describe but one.

The legend upon which the performance of the Snake Dance is based is as follows.<sup>3</sup> The Zuñis, Hopis, Paiutes, and the Havasupais made their recent ascent from the lower world through the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, some going north and others south. Those that went into the cold region were driven back by the

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Roth, "Ethnological Studies among the North-West-Central Queensland Aborigines" (Brisbane & London, 1897), p. 167; J. G. Frazer, "Golden Bough," Vol. I, p. 255 (1911).

<sup>2</sup> Major-General McCook, U. S. A., 8 American Anthropologist, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> J. W. James, "Indians of the Painted Desert," pp. 107 ff.

inclement weather and so took up their abode at a place called To-ho-na-bi. This was a desert region where there was little rain and consequently but little corn. The chief of the village had two sons and two daughters. The older boy, Tiyo, determined to return, if possible, to the lower world and there learn the way of obtaining the favor of the gods. He sealed himself into a coffin-like boat which was then placed in the river. After being tossed about for a long time he finally came to the home of the Spider Woman, who was able to weave the clouds and cause the rain to fall. She showed him the way to reach the chamber of the Snake-Antelope peoples. The chief received him with great kindness and taught him the ceremonies necessary to cause the rain to fall and the wind to blow. He was also taught how to make the various paraphernalia necessary for the dance. Before he left, he was given two women, one for himself and one for his brother. On their way back they stopped to see the Spider Woman, who put them in a basket so that they might return to the upper world. When Tiyo reached home, he announced that he would celebrate his marriage feast in nine days. Five days later the Snake people came from the Under-

world, went into the *kivas*,<sup>1</sup> ate corn pollen, and then disappeared. Tiyo, however, knew that they had only changed their appearance, and that they were still in the valley in the form of snakes and other reptiles. He ordered his people to go and capture them, and after they had been brought in, to wash them and dance with them. Four days were devoted to their capture—one for each of the four world-quarters. After the snakes were brought in and while they were being washed, they listened to the prayers that were uttered. They then went out and danced with their human brothers. In the end, they were taken to the valley so that they might return to the underworld, carrying with them the petitions of the men on the earth. This, in brief, is the Snake legend, which is acted out in the dance.

The whole performance of the Snake Dance takes about nine days, the first eight of which are occupied with the collecting and the preparing of the snakes as was done in the legend, the making of a certain charmed mixture which is supposed to have the effect of curing any bites which the performers may receive, and of making and blessing all the paraphernalia used in the big dance, which comes on the ninth

<sup>1</sup> *Kiva* = sacred hut in which preliminary preparations take place.

day. Throughout all of these ceremonies there is much singing and praying in honor of the rain god. In the kiva there is an altar erected, upon which the hundred or more snakes used in the dance, are thrown after they have been washed and dusted with sacred meal. This altar is symbolic, and consists, for the most part, of a mosaic made of different colored sands. These sands are sprinkled on the floor, so as to form a border of several parallel rows or lines of different colors. Within this border, clouds are represented, below which four zigzag lines are made. These lines figure the lightning, which is the symbol of the Antelope fraternity. Black lines represent much desired and supposedly impending rain. The palladium of the fraternity, made of feathers and strings, is placed in the corner. Other things used in the dance are laid on different parts of the altar.

On the ninth day, just before sunset, the crowning event takes place. A space of ground, preferably rock floor, comprising a few square rods, is chosen as the stage upon which the sacred drama is to be portrayed. At one side is built a sort of bower of trees about eight or ten feet in height and five or six feet in diameter. In front of the bower a hole is dug in



the ground, and over this is placed a board, which, when stepped upon, produces a hollow sound. This is symbolic of the entrance to the other world, and later, when the dancers step upon it, the purpose is to call the attention of their brethren below to the ceremonial about to begin.<sup>1</sup> Those taking part in the ceremony are members of the Snake and Antelope clans, usually about twenty in number. The dancers are costumed for the occasion, and much paint adorns their faces. The Snake men carry whips in their hands, and bags of sacred meal, while the leader of the Snake Society whirls a buzzing stick.

“The Antelope men are the first to appear within the court. They march four times around in a circle and take positions alongside the *kisi*,<sup>2</sup> facing outward from it. The Snake men then enter, marching in the same way as did the members of the other society and scatter sacred meal near the bower. Each man, as he comes along, stamps on the thick board already described. As has been noted, this is to attract the attention of the gods to the zeal and faith-

<sup>1</sup> This stamping on a board is characteristic of the “Nō” plays of Japan, where the purpose was originally to call the attention of the sun goddess. M. C. Stopes, “Plays of Old Japan — The ‘Nō,’” p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Kisi* = a bower made of branches of trees erected on the dancing floor where the snakes are kept just before the ceremony begins.

fulness of the performers. The Snake men then form in a line about six feet from the Antelope men and face them. The Antelope men lift and drop their feet in perfect time, thus producing dull blunt sounds from the tortoise shells tied to their legs, and simultaneously shaking their suggestive hissing rattles; the Snake men, with arms linked and bodies swaying this way and that, give utterance to low deep chants.

“A moment later the Snake men have broken their line and formed into squads of three, each consisting of a dancer, a wand-carrier, or hugger, and a gatherer. The Antelope men still remain in line. One squad after another marches around in front of the kisi. A serpent is handed by the keeper to a dancer, who has previously placed meal in his mouth. Seizing the reptile he takes it between his lips a few inches back of the head. The hugger places his left arm over the shoulder of the dancer and, with his right, waves his feather wand before the eyes of the snake to attract its attention and keep it from burying its poisonous fangs in the face of his companion. The two pass around the court, pursuing the same course as that previously taken by the two orders. The gatherer moves along near by, keeping careful watch in

order to pick up the serpent in case it should wriggle out of the mouth of the dancer. Other squads follow and soon there is a line of these performers moving round and round, the snakes twisting and wriggling and throwing their heads about in the air, the wands rapidly rotating and gyrating, the various shells and rattles producing a most doleful noise. When the snake becomes ungovernable, the dancer lets it drop from his mouth upon the ground and it is picked up by the gatherer. When one serpent has fallen from the mouth of the dancer, he with his hugger marches around at once to the kisi for another. This is continued until all the animals are carried. The gatherer, as well as the hugger, carries a wand, and if the snake which has been dropped to the ground coils to strike, he waves the wand above the maddened creature until it uncoils to run away, when he catches it around the neck and carries it with him. The gatherers carry bags of sacred meal, and scatter portions of the contents upon the animals, before seizing them. When the performers are going round and round with their strange talismans, the snake women stand just outside the line of march and throw sacred meal on each as he passes. As the serpents accumulate in the hands of the

gatherer so that he cannot conveniently handle them, he passes them over to the Antelope men, who hold them during the remainder of the ceremony.

"The final act of this strange drama occurs a little later when the chief Snake priest draws a sacred meal circle some four or five feet in diameter and, within it, six radiating lines representing the four cardinal points, the zenith and the nadir. With a rush the reptiles are piled within the ring. As they crawl and squirm about within the enclosed space, they form a comparatively level heap sometimes several inches in height. The men thrust their naked arms into the heap and drag out as many as their hands can hold, and rush with them out of the village down to the plains below, there to set them free."<sup>1</sup>

As we said at the beginning of this description, the Snake Dance is the acting out of an

<sup>1</sup> Fynn, "The American Indian as a Product of Environment," pp. 212-226; G. W. James, "Indians of the Painted Desert," pp. 103-117; J. W. Fewkes, "Snake Ceremonies at Walpi," *Journal of American Ethnology and Archæology*, Vol. IV, 1894; "Hopi Snake Washing," 11 *American Anthropologist*, p. 313; J. G. Bourke, "The Snake Dance of the Moquis of Arizona"; Dorsey and Voth, "Mishongovoni Ceremonies of the Snake and Antelope Fraternities," *Field Columbian Museum Publication, Anthropological Series III*, No. 3, 1902.

old legend which was invented by the people to account for the phenomenon of rain, which had for them no scientific explanation. Most of the early myths had a deep religious significance and were closely bound up with the spiritual life of the people. Many have supposed that this Snake Dance is an act of serpent worship, but this is not true, for the snakes symbolize to them the embodiments of the spirits of their ancestors from whom they obtained the knowledge of rain-making. In the propitiation of the Spider Woman at her shrine in the kiva by offerings of prayer and food, the chief Antelope priest expresses to her a desire for rain. "She is asked to weave the clouds, for without them no rain can descend. The lightning symbol of the Antelope priests; the shaking of the rattles, which sounds like the falling rain; the use of the whizzer to produce the sounds of the coming storm, — these and other similar things show the intimate association of the dance with rain and its making.

"The use of snakes is for a double purpose. In celebrating this ceremony it is the desire of the snake clan to reproduce the original conditions of its performance as nearly as possible, in order to gain all the efficacy they desire for

their petitions. In the original performance the prayers of the Snake Mother were the potent ones. Hence the snakes must now be introduced to make potent prayers.

"The other idea is, that the snakes act as intermediaries to convey to the Snake Mother in the underworld the prayers for rain and corn growth, that her children on earth have uttered."<sup>1</sup> But it is even more than this — it is the essential element in their religious life and is to them as important as the mass is to those in the Roman Catholic Church. Their whole life is bound up with this ceremonial, and if any slip is made in the performance they expect to feel the wrath of the gods visited upon them in the form of a drought.

Equally important for agriculture as the rain, is the heat of the sun. There are, however, comparatively few sun ceremonies among savage peoples, for the reason that most of them are living in a tropical or semitropical region where there is no lack of heat. Those who inhabit the far north have no agriculture, so that they have no special need either for the rain or sun.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. W. James, "Indians of the Painted Desert," p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> "On the geographical significance of sun-worship, D'Orbigny has made a remark, suggestive, if not altogether sound, connecting the worship of the sun not so much with the torrid regions, where his glar-

Only among a few of the savages living in the temperate zone, where an even distribution of rain and sunshine is needed for the crops, do we find the ceremonies connected with the sun.

On January 23, 1912, there took place at the Pueblo village of San Ildefonso, in New Mexico, a Buffalo Dance to the Sun God. "The dance in which several hundred Indians participated is of heathen origin, and is performed as it was before the days of Columbus. The Indians say that no alteration has been made in the dance in a thousand years, and some of the masks and costumes used are hundreds of years old. The theme of the dance is an entreaty to the sun god to grant a year of plenty of game and corn. At dawn the bucks, disguised as buffalo, deer, antelope, and elk, marched in a single file from a gap in the mountains into a pueblo, where they joined the squaws in a measure, to the sound of a chorus of voices, and beat of cotton-wood drums." <sup>1</sup>

ing heat oppresses man all day long, and drives him to the shade for refuge, as with climates where his presence is welcomed for his life-giving heat, and nature chills at his departure. Thus while the low sultry forests of South America show little prominence of Sun-worship, this is the dominant organized cultus of the high table-lands of Peru and Cundinamarca." E. B. Tylor, "Primitive Culture," Vol. II, p. 286.

<sup>1</sup> The New York Times, January 24, 1912.

The most famous of all these is the Sun Dance of the Plains Indians.<sup>1</sup> This ceremony, which takes place as a rule during the summer months and has as its object the overcoming of certain hostile cosmic forces, abounds in symbols. The principal theme seems to be the attack upon the sun dancers, who defeat the solar god by their "medicine" and compel the "thunder bird" to allow the rain to fall. The dance is very often given as a vow in case of sickness, lunacy, or bad dreams, and is a sort of propitiatory offering by the one who wishes to be cured, to the great ruling power — the sun.

Before the dance begins, there is a very elaborate stage setting constructed, each part of which has a symbolic meaning. The following diagram describes this in a general way.

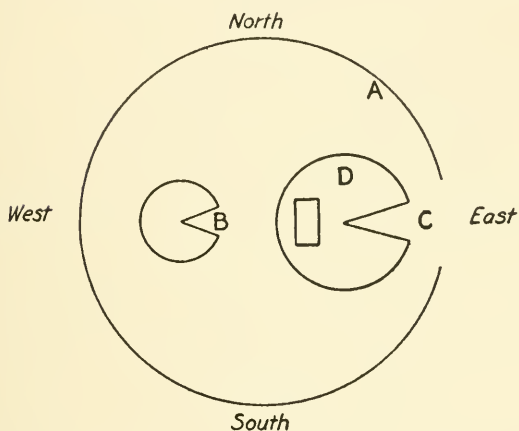
- A. *Camp Circle*, with the opening towards the East.
- B. *Secret Tipi*. Various secret rites by the priests take place in this tipi, such as smoking, fasting, praying and preparation of objects that are to be worn during the public ceremony.
- C. *Lodge*. The selection of the centre pole is the most important part of its build-

<sup>1</sup> This dance takes place among the Cree, Siksika, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Assiniboin, Ponca, Shoshoni, and the Ute Indians.



ing, for it represents the sun. After the completion of the lodge all the priests reside there until the end of the performance.

- D. *Altar*. This varies from a simple buffalo skull and pile on a cleared circle of earth, as among the Ponca, to a very elaborate arrangement, as among the Cheyenne.



The *Camp Circle* symbolizes the constellation Corona Borealis, which is frequently spoken of by the plains tribes as the camp circle of the gods above. Again, the camp circle may be regarded as symbolizing the horizon, standing for the universe. The *Tipi of Secret Preparation* corresponds to the sacred mountain to which the originator of the ceremony repaired when

in distress. In the course of the ceremony it is related that in the past during a period of famine a warrior wandered forth with a companion and encountered a god who taught them the ceremony. On their return to the tribe they caused it to be performed and this brought relief and a boundless supply of food through the appearance of the buffalo — an animal which up to that time had never appeared. Hence the Sun Dance is the acting out of the life of some mythical ancestor, assisted by various symbolic articles which were supposed to play a prominent part in his life. If we look back for a moment to the Snake Dance, it will be noticed that in the legend there, a youth wanders away, reaches a mystic land where he learns the means of performing the necessary ceremony, and then, when he returns, teaches it to his people so that they are able to accomplish it. Many of the legends of the savages are supposed to have had divine origin, and the connection is made between this and the spirit world by some one who wanders to the latter and is there taught by the gods. This explains clearly why there is such a close relationship between myths and religion.

The *lodge* itself represents this earth as the home of man. Its construction forms a very

important part of the ceremony. A sacred tree in the forest is found, cut down, and set up as the centre pole of the lodge. It is in the fork of this pole that the nest of the thunder bird is supposed to be. The finished lodge is circular in form and from sixty to one hundred feet in diameter. The only opening is towards the east. When it is finished the priests abandon the *Tipi of Secret Preparation* and take up their quarters in the new lodge for the rest of the ceremony, which, from the beginning of the secret preparation to the end, lasts eight days.

The *altar* is a cleared circle of earth with a buffalo skull in the centre. Around this are curious "sand paintings" — that is, sands of different colors are arranged in various mystic patterns. Green bushes and young trees are stuck in the ground around the altar.

Before the dance begins, the priests decorate the bodies of those who are to take part. The designs which are used are symbols of the sun, the moon, and the morning star. Around their heads, waists, wrists, and ankles the dancers wear wreaths, which are emblems of the sun. Four of the old men who take part in the performance are supposed to represent the four quarters of the earth.

Among the Arapahoes before the beginning of the dance the following prayer is offered to the Sun. "My Grandfather, Light of the World, Old Woman Night, My Grandmother, — I stand here before this people, old and young. May whatever they undertake to do in this ceremony and may their desires and wishes and anxieties in their everyday life, meet with your approval — may the growing corn not fail them, and may everything they put in the ground mature, in order that they may have food and nourishment for their children and friends. May whatever light comes from above, and also the rain, be strengthened to them, that they may live on the earth under your protection . . ." <sup>1</sup>

The various portions of this dramatic Sun Dance deal with the legends of the past. The forces of nature are personified and the continual struggle for mastery between them is graphically portrayed. During one part of the dance the actors form in line and blow whistles made from the wing bone of the eagle. This accompanies the song of the musicians, who are seated about a large drum at the entrance of the lodge. It is supposed to be symbolic of the breath

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Dorsey, "Arapaho Sun Dance," Field Museum, Anthropological Series IV, 1903, p. 36.

of life, and to represent the cry of the thunder bird.

Portions of the dance which used to be considered essential, but which have lately been abolished by the United States Government, were the various tortures which were endured. An Indian would fasten into the flesh of his breast the ends of two rawhide thongs which hung from the top of the sacred pole. Through the flesh of his back and hips knives were thrust and through the four holes thus made, short thongs were passed and securely fastened to the flesh. To the end of each of these thongs a buffalo skull was tied, which dragged on the ground. The purpose of the warrior was to dance around until the thongs were torn from his breast, and when thus released, to continue dancing until the heavy skulls had pulled the other thongs loose from his bleeding back and thighs. His friends and family, mad with religious zeal and enthusiasm, danced around him, chanting songs and urging him to bear his suffering bravely. This self-inflicted torture is a penance and is done in order that special favors may be obtained from the gods.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Dorsey, 30 Bulletin, Bureau of Ethnology, Vol. II, p. 651; H. L. Scott, "Notes on the Kado, or Sun Dance, of the Kiowa," 13

A religious drama such as this, with its music, dancing, and symbolism, is not very far removed from the plays of the early Greek period. There the myths of the gods of vegetation were acted out; here among the Indians the legend in connection with the Sun and the other elements. They both show the striving of a mind unde-

American Anthropologist, p. 345; L. Farrand, "Basis of American History," pp. 138 ff.; A. J. Fynn, "The American Indian as a Product of Environment," pp. 185 ff.; G. A. Dorsey, "Arapaho Sun Dance," Field Museum Anthropological Series, Vol. IV., Chicago, 1903; A. C. Fletcher, "The Sun Dance of the Ogalalla Sioux," Proc. A. A. A. S., Vol. 31, 1882, pp. 580 ff.; G. H. Pond, "Dakota Sun Dance," Minn. Hist. Coll., Vol. II, pp. 166 ff.; J. O. Dorsey, "A Study of the Siouan Cults," Report Bureau Ethnology, Vol. II, "The Sun Dance," pp. 450 ff.

The Hartford Times, Nov. 15, 1913. "The federal government has decided not to permit in the future this most important of all the ceremonials of the plains tribes. It contends that such performances have a tendency to 'retard the moral and material welfare' of the Indians." The missionaries thought that the performance was heathenish, and that it tended to delay the progress of Christianity among the plains tribes. So it is that little by little the dramatic ceremonies of the savages are being pushed aside by the rapid advance of civilization, and it is only the matter of a few years when these ceremonies will have become merely memories. Indian Office Regulations, Art. 4, Section 584. "The 'sun dance,' and all other similar dances and so-called religious ceremonies, shall be considered 'Indian offenses,' and any Indian found guilty of being a participant in any one or more of these 'offenses' shall, for the first offense committed, be punished by withholding from him his rations for a period not exceeding ten days; and if found guilty of any subsequent offense under this rule, shall be punished by withholding his rations for a period not less than fifteen days nor more than thirty days, or by incarceration in the agency prison for a period not exceeding thirty days."

veloped, first, to account for the natural phenomena, and second, to appeal to the ruling spirits for some of the necessities of life. It is only a step from the time when the religious element is predominant to the time when this disappears entirely, leaving a play which is performed for the pleasure which it gives to the actors and spectators.

In the religious myth plays of the savages which have been described in this chapter, we have the connecting link between a low and a high stage of culture, or rather between the highest of a low stage and the lowest of a high stage. At this point of union, agriculture forms one of the chief sources of the food supply and it is little wonder then that around this there should be woven a vast network of myths and legends, the purpose of which is to account by pseudo-scientific means for the otherwise unexplainable phenomena, and at the same time enroll the spiritual element of the other world on the side of struggling man. It was out of the personification of these forces, as combined in the all-fertilizing power of the sun, that the drama of the Greeks and that of the Japanese grew. A comparison of the origin and development of the dramas of the savages, the Greeks

and the Japanese, will be dealt with somewhat at length in the next chapter.

From this chapter it is evident that as people move from the hunting or a partial hunting stage to the agricultural, the number of ceremonies in connection with plant food greatly increases. As we have seen, those peoples whose life is devoted to hunting have many ceremonies in connection with the animals. If plants enter to any extent into their food supply, they have a few more or less dramatic rites for the purpose of increasing the store of them. But where agriculture plays an important part, as in North America, the ceremonies are very numerous. The spirits of the dead seem to occupy those things which form the chief means of subsistence for the living man, whether it be animal or plant, and hence are appealed to in order that through their beneficent influence the people may not starve.



*POINTS OF COMPARISON BETWEEN  
THE SAVAGE DRAMA AND THAT  
OF THE GREEKS AND  
JAPANESE*



## CHAPTER IV

### *POINTS OF COMPARISON BETWEEN THE SAVAGE DRAMA AND THAT OF THE GREEKS AND JAPANESE*

CONSIDERABLE light may be thrown on the drama of civilized peoples by comparing the legends, myths, and plays of the higher culture with the ceremonies and dramatic rites of savages. The basis of comparison lies in the myths, for in them we see the strivings of minds, simple and uninstructed, to account for the phenomena of nature. In this connection Lang says, "Just as Socrates in the Platonic dialogues recalls or invents a myth in the despair of reason, so the savage has a story for answer to almost every question that he can ask himself. These stories are in a sense scientific, because they attempt a solution of the riddles of the world. They are in a sense religious, because there is usually a supernatural power, a *deus ex machina* of some sort,

to cut the knot of the problem. Such stories, then, are the science, and to certain extent the religious tradition, of the savages." <sup>1</sup>

A detailed description of the rise of the nature-myths in Greece, or of their development through their various stages until they appear in the plays as written by Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes is not germane to the topic before us. They probably arose through the worship of the gods of vegetation or possibly through the worship of the sun, and in their onward march they served to explain the change of the seasons, the fruition of the crops, and the fertility of the vine. The god who appeared with the greatest regularity in these myths was Dionysus, in honor of whom the plays were written.<sup>2</sup> He has been thought by various writers to have been a personification

<sup>1</sup> Lang, "Myth, Ritual, and Religion," Vol. I, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> In Egypt, that country which was so greatly admired by the Greeks, among other reasons because of its religious development, there were performed many rites in connection with Isis and Osiris; and it was not until these gods were accepted by the Greeks, in modified forms (Dionysus and Adonis), that there appears any ceremony which can truly be called dramatic.

That the Greek Dionysus was nothing but a slightly disguised form of the Egyptian Osiris has been held by Herodotus in ancient and by Mr. Foucart in modern times. See Herodotus, Vol. II, p. 49; P. Foucart, "Le Culte de Dionysus en Attique" (Paris, 1904); Frazer, "Golden Bough, Adonis — Attis — Osiris," p. 344 note.

of the sun, or of the seasons, or of vegetation in general, or, finally, of the vine.<sup>1</sup> It is important to notice here that among some savage peoples the cult of the sun god and of various vegetation gods forms the basis for a large number of their dramatic rites. In fact these rites were but a specialized part of the ritual. The purpose in both the high and low civilizations was the same, namely, to act out the myths so that the spirits would understand the exact nature of the requests and at the same time, by reason of their anthropomorphic characters, receive pleasure at the performance.

While the myth was the subject-matter common to the drama of the savage as to that of the Greek, it was the dance which united these two on the basis of action. It is possible to point out a great many survivals of the savage drama in even the highest stage of the Greek drama. This can be done more readily, since

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of the rise and development of these myths see: Lang, "Myth, Ritual, and Religion," Vol. I; Frazer, "Golden Bough — Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild"; Barnett, "The Greek Drama"; Foucart, "Le Culte de Dionysus en Attique"; Frazer, "Adonis, Attis, Osiris"; Sumner, "Folkways"; Harrison, "Ancient Art and Ritual"; Haigh, "The Attic Theatre"; L. Campbell, "Religion in Greek Literature"; Donaldson, "Theatre of the Greeks"; Aristotle, "Poetics," IV, 12; Harrison, "Themis"; Buckham, "Theatre of the Greeks."

the highest Greek drama still dealt with the myths. Of course the more sophisticated race infused in these myths, elements and interpretations that could not have been the product of anything short of a developed civilization. But a similar comparison with later literature, such as the Elizabethan drama, would be less productive, because the latter is much further advanced in both subject-matter and mode of handling. Naturally the greatest weight is to be laid upon the earlier stages of the Greek drama rather than the later.

A number of peoples who worship a god of vegetation and fruition express the idea of spring, the awakening of new life, by lively actions. This they do in the dance. We know that most of the savage drama is danced; in fact, this desire for lively rhythmical action is implanted in man as deeply as is the dramatic desire, and there are no races, even on the lowest scale of social development, who do not exhibit it. They also have many dances which are not of a mimetic character but which may be termed gymnastic,<sup>1</sup> and consist in jumping about with movements more or less rhythmical.<sup>2</sup> In this,

<sup>1</sup> Grosse, "The Beginnings of Art," p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> This latter fact comes about through the very physical make-up

too, the Greeks were proficient, for many of the dances around the altar of the god were not mimetic, but were performed much as are some of the dances of a savage people, around the graves of the dead or around their camp fires at night.

Dancing remained an important feature throughout the entire evolution of Greek dramatic art, although many of the other elements which appeared in its early history had entirely vanished by the time of the great dramatists. In this later stage the poetry was the principal feature of the performance, while the music and dancing were subordinate. Moreover, dancing

of man. His heart beats in a rhythmical way and when he walks there is a regular rhythm to his step. Practically all of the reports which come to us concerning the music and dancing of the savages agree on the fact that they are rhythmical, although they may be far from possessing those qualities of beauty which appeal to the eye and ear of a civilized man. Grosse says, "This enjoyment of rhythm is without doubt deeply seated in the human organization. It is, however, an exaggeration to say that the rhythmical is always the natural form of our movements; however, a large portion of them, particularly those which serve in making a change of place, are executed naturally in rhythmical form. Further, every stronger emotional excitement, as Spencer has justly observed, tends to express itself in rhythmical movements of the body; and Gurney adds the pertinent remark that every emotional movement is in and of itself rhythmical. In this way the rhythm of the motions of the dance appears to be simply the natural form of the movements of locomotion sharply and powerfully exalted by the pressure of emotional excitement." "The Beginnings of Art," p. 223.

was seldom introduced by itself as a mere spectacle; it was mainly used in combination with singing, to interpret and add vividness to the words of the song. The music, the poetry, and the dancing were blended together into one harmonious whole, each part gaining an advantage by its combination with the other two.<sup>1</sup> Most, if not all, of the choruses were accompanied by dances of one sort or another. To the Greek mind there was an inseparable connection between song and dance, and the notion of choral singing unaccompanied by dancing would have appeared strange and unusual. The two arts had grown and developed simultaneously, as appears from the fact that many of the technical terms in metrical phraseology referred originally to the movements of the dance. For instance, the smallest division of a verse was called a "foot." A verse of two feet was styled a "basis" or "stepping." The words "arsis" and "thesis" originally referred to the raising up and placing down of the foot in

<sup>1</sup> "We easily understand that music, dancing, acting and poetry were originally combined, none of them existing in the shape which characterizes it at present. Among people who stood on a low level of civilization, these arts worked collectively in shouting, singing, acting, talking and jumping." K. Mantzius, "A History of Theatrical Art," Vol. I, p. 3.



marching and dancing. These terms show how closely the two arts of dancing and singing were associated together in ancient Greece.<sup>1</sup>

The mimetic dance appears for a long time as a survival. "Occasionally," says Haigh,<sup>2</sup> "the long descriptive speeches delivered from the stage were accompanied with a mimetic dance on the part of the chorus. The events described by the actor were represented in dumb show by the choreutae. . . . Some of the postures or figures in the tragic dance are mentioned by the ancient writers. One of them represented a man in the act of thrusting with the sword; another depicted a man in an attitude of menace, with clenched fist. The rest are a mere list of names of which the meaning is uncertain. But it is plain from the existence of such lists that the art of tragic dancing was reduced to a regular system, and that the various attitudes and postures were taught in a methodical manner.

"The purpose, then, of ancient dancing was to represent various objects and events by means of gestures, postures, and attitudes. In this kind of mimicry the nations of southern Europe are particularly skilful, as may be seen at the

<sup>1</sup> Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," pp. 311 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 311 ff.

present day. The art was carried by the Greeks to the highest perfection, and a good dancer was able to accompany a song with such expressive pantomime as to create a visible picture of the things described. Aristotle defines dancing as an imitation of 'actions, characters, and passions by means of postures and rhythmical movements.'"<sup>1</sup>

Contrasting then the dance in the drama of the savages and of the Greeks, we may say that in the first it dominated the whole performance, but in the second it was subordinate to the more important action.

It is very probable that in the early religious history of Greece, as among the more primitive of the savages, all the people took active part in the dramatic dances around the altar.<sup>2</sup> When the rites and the dances became more complicated, that is, when they reached that stage where they had to be performed in exactly the same way every time or lose their efficacy, it was impossible for the common people to participate in them to any great extent and so there came to be certain men who specialized in this part of the service of the gods.<sup>3</sup> These men

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's definition is to be found in "Poetics," II.

<sup>2</sup> Donaldson, "Theatre of the Greeks," p. 242.

<sup>3</sup> Harrison, "Ancient Art and Ritual," p. 126.

did not constitute a priestly class, as we understand the word, although they did act in some degree as intermediaries between the gods and man at the time of the festival and plays.<sup>1</sup>

For a long time in the early history of the Greek religious drama there were really no actors in our sense of the word, for the chorus were the only performers. Later the actors were evolved out of the chorus by a selection of those who were most capable. Such reciters-in-chief, naturally, as elsewhere in the world, added<sup>2</sup> impersonation. This developing histrionic ability later became the important item in the selection, with the result that the chorus sank to a less important position than they had held before. The actors of the later period were chosen for their acting talent, although one performer was sometimes the author of the play. The distinction between actor and chorus is brought out in the fact that the chorus was chosen and paid by

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," p. 1 (3d ed.). "By degrees, as the songs and dances of satyrs adopted fixed forms and rhythms, their performance claimed more especial training and particularly qualified artists. Thus the Bacchic chorus came to form a kind of staff of professional singers and dancers." K. Mantzius, "A History of Theatrical Art," Vol. I, p. 98. "A dramatic performance was a religious act; therefore those who took part in it were considered as the servants of religion, as a kind of priests." K. Mantzius, Vol. I, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> The priests in the Church of the Middle Ages did this.

the choregus,<sup>1</sup> while the actors were hired by the state. "The term 'hypokrites' or 'actor' was never applied to a member of the chorus. It was not even applied to all the performers upon the stage, but only to such of them as took a prominent part in the dialogue. The various mute characters, such as the soldiers and attendants, and also the subordinate characters who had only a few words to say, were not dignified with the title of 'actor.' In the second place it should be remembered that the Greek actors invariably wore masks, and were consequently able to appear in several parts of the same performance. When, therefore, it is said that in the early history of Greek tragedy only a single actor was employed in each play, this does not imply that the number of characters was limited to one. All it implies is, that only one character could appear at a time. The number of actors in a Greek play never exceeded three, even in the latest period."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The choregus not only paid for the chorus but also bore the expense of producing the plays. In the earlier history he may have taken part in the plays but it is certain that in the later time he was merely the active patron. Donaldson, "Theatre of the Greeks," p. 242. In Australia (Ch. VII, p. 227) and on the Andaman Islands (Ch. VII, p. 230 note) there was a single individual who performed these functions, but he was also the stage manager.

<sup>2</sup> Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," p. 221.

Among the Greeks the acting profession was looked upon as a noble calling and the members were honored in every way.<sup>1</sup> If we recall the

<sup>1</sup> "Even as early as the fourth century B.C. the members of the theatrical profession formed guilds for the protection of their personal rights and interests. These guilds included not only actors, but also dramatic authors, *choreutai*, teachers of the chorus, musicians, even persons of whom costumes were hired. Through their union these corporations gradually obtained considerable privileges and special favors for their members. Thus actors had the right at any time to go to foreign, even to hostile states, to play comedies, and even in times of war their persons and property were sacred and inviolable. Later, the guilds also succeeded in obtaining immunity from military service for their members, a favour which had long been refused, but which they thought was their due on account of the religious character of their profession. A decree granting these privileges was passed by the council of the Greek federation, and a copy of it, engraved on stone, was erected in the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens. Some of the items of this remarkable decree, which is fortunately preserved, ran as follows: It has been resolved by the Amphictyonic Council that security of person and property, and exemption from arrest during peace and war, be ensured to the artists of Dionysus at Athens; . . . that they enjoy that exemption from military service, and that personal security which have previously been granted to them by the whole Greek nation; that the artists of Dionysus be exempt from military service, in order that they may hold the appointed celebrations in honour of the gods at the proper seasons, and be released from other business and consecrated to the service of the gods; that it be unlawful to arrest or seize an artist of Dionysus in time of war or peace, unless for debt due to a city or a private person; that if an artist be arrested in violation of these conditions, the person who arrests him, and the city in which the violation of the law occurs, be brought to account before the Amphictyonic Council; that the immunity from service and personal security which are granted by the Amphictyonic Council to the artists of Dionysus at Athens be perpetual; that the secretaries cause a copy of this decree to be engraved on a stone pillar and erected in the temple, and another sealed copy of the same to be sent to Athens, in order to show the

examples which have been given, we shall remember instances which show that the leading men in the primitive tribe, clan or totem, took part in the dramatic performances. "In Athens players were not infrequently sent as representatives of the republic on embassies and deputations. They were, however, as a body, men of loose and dissipated character, and as such were regarded with an unfavorable eye by the moralists and philosophers of that age."<sup>1</sup> One great difference which we find arising between the high and low stages of culture is that the actors in Greece had no other vocation, while in many of the savage communities the actors were not differentiated as regards the pursuit of the struggle for existence from their fellowmen; the Greek actors could specialize because the state maintained the theatres<sup>2</sup> at its own expense. The medicine man, who often took the leading rôles in the religious dramas of the savages, was sup-

Athenians that the Amphictyonic Council are deeply concerned in the observance of religious duties at Athens, and are ready to accede to the requests of the artists of Dionysus, and to ratify their present privileges and confer such other benefits upon them as may be possible (Haigh's translation, 'Attic Theatre,' p. 253)." Mantzius, "A History of Theatrical Art," pp. 176-8.

<sup>1</sup> Buckham, "Theatre of the Greeks," pp. 222 ff.; Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," pp. 279 ff. In Roman times the actors were held in contempt. Chambers, "The Mediæval Stage, Vol. I, pp. 7 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," p. 4.

ported by the community as a whole, but he was the only one, and this support was not official.

Both in Greece and with the savages the acting profession was confined entirely to men. In Greece the reason was that the carriage and voice of women could not give suitable energy to the heroines of tragedy.<sup>1</sup> This was not the reason why women among the savages did not take part; it was rather because women were thought unclean and hence could not participate in a religious observance.<sup>2</sup> However, they were allowed to assist off the stage by singing and playing while the men did the acting.

One very striking difference between the drama of the savages and that of the highest Greek period is the fact that in Athens the plays, written for the two Dionysiac festivals, which occurred each spring and each winter, were performed only once and then were thrown aside to be given in the country villages, while among the savages the performances were incessantly repeated. In Greece the result of this was, that as long as the creative period of the drama lasted, the few days given up to the

<sup>1</sup> Buckham, "Theatre of the Greeks," p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 37.

plays hardly sufficed even for a single performance of the various new compositions. "Nor were repetitions necessary. The theatre at Athens was of enormous size, so that every man had a chance of seeing a play when it was first bought out. If it was successful, and he wished to see it again, he had numerous opportunities of doing so at the Rural Dionysia, where reproductions were the rule. For these reasons the Athenian stage of the fifth century was confined almost exclusively to original works. When a play had once been performed it was never seen again, as far as Athens was concerned, unless it happened to be of extraordinary merit. It is stated on the authority of Dicæarchus that the *Frogs* of Aristophanes 'was so much admired on account of its parabasis that it was actually repeated.'"<sup>1</sup>

The origin of most of the savage plays is lost in obscurity. In all probability, instead of having been composed by one man or one group of men, they came into being through a long process of evolution. The Greek poet wrote his plays down, but the savage handed them on word for word and action for action from time immemorial. It is in this one element that we

<sup>1</sup> Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," p. 71.



see a very striking contrast between the drama as a religious observance in Greece and among the savages. To these latter the plays in themselves were a supplication to the spirits for the certain definite things which the plays set forth. They asked for food, for rain, for sun, for success in battle, through this medium of sympathetic magic. It is very doubtful if the average savage man had anything like adoration in mind during his religious observances. His was a prosperity policy bounded by material things. He always wanted something definite with which to ease the struggle for existence, and, except for the attempt to attain it, he had neither the time nor the inclination, and perhaps not the mind, to devote to these forms which appear in a more highly developed stage of society. This same statement can be made about the rites of the early Greeks which afterwards developed into the drama as we know it, but of the later stage it would not be true. By the time of the great dramatists, supplication for the things set forth in the play had entirely disappeared, and in its stead there was adoration and supplication for general well-being. Throughout its entire period the Greek theatre never became merely a place of public entertainment; "it was the temple of

the god, whose altar was the central point of the semicircle of seats or steps, from which some 30,000 of his worshippers gazed upon a spectacle instituted in his honor. Our theatrical costumes are intended to convey an idea of the dresses actually worn by the persons represented, while those of the Greeks were nothing but modifications of the festal robes worn in the Dionysiac processions.”<sup>1</sup>

During the greater part of the year the Athenians had other forms of entertainment besides the theatre. It was only when the annual festivals of Dionysus came round that they were able to enjoy the plays. “On such occasions their eagerness and enthusiasm were proportionately great. The whole city kept holiday, and gave itself up to pleasure, and to the worship of the wine-god. Business was abandoned; the law-courts were closed; distraints for debt forbidden during the continuance of the festival; even prisoners were released from gaol, to enable them to share in the common festivities. The theatre, the chief centre of attraction, was thronged with spectators, and the number of plays provided was large enough to compensate for their scarcity at other periods. Several

<sup>1</sup> Donaldson, “Theatre of the Greeks,” pp. 238 ff.

days in succession were devoted to the drama. Tragedies followed one another without intermission from morning till evening. In the midst of these pleasures the religious aspect of the performance, as a ceremony in honor of Dionysus, established in obedience to the direct commands of the oracle, was not forgotten. The audience came with garlands on their heads, as to a sacred gathering. The statue of Dionysus was brought to the theatre and placed in front of the stage, so that the god might enjoy the spectacle along with his worshippers. The chief seats in the theatre were mostly occupied by priests, and the central seat of all was reserved for the priest of Dionysus. The performance of plays was preceded by the sacrifice of a victim to the god of the festival. The poets who wrote the plays, the choregi who paid for them, and the actors and singers who performed them, were all looked upon as ministers of religion, and their persons were sacred and inviolable. The theatre itself possessed all the sanctity attaching to a temple. Any form of outrage committed there was treated, not merely as an offence against the ordinary laws, but as a sacrilegious act, and was punished with corresponding severity.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Haigh, “The Attic Theatre,” pp. 1 ff.

However true the statement may be that the Greek drama retained its religious character to the end, it seems almost necessary that a modification should be made in it, in order to show the tendency which was in progress. In the early history the plays or dramatic rites were in themselves, that is, in their subject-matter, an act of worship, and were performed when the people needed certain definite things, such as good crops, sun, or rain. Passing now over the intervening years, we see in the plays of the great tragedians the drama itself taking on a less religious character. The plays deal with human beings and their interests, although the gods are not forgotten and are even brought on the stage. The religious element which remains, is the fact that they are performed at a festival of Dionysus, but so are the games and races of all sorts, and these in themselves are hardly called religious. If any one of these things had been performed at any other time, there would have been nothing religious about it. In other words, the time and the place, but not the subject-matter (as the mass in the Roman Catholic Church) made them religious. With the savage this is somewhat different, for among them we often find the so-called religious plays, that is,

those which in their subject-matter are an appeal to the gods, being performed merely for the pleasure which they give, with no deeper motive. In the plays of the Middle Ages we see another very good example of this, for "the element which originally constituted its whole essence has been overwhelmed and superseded by the more powerful ingredients which have been introduced into it by the continually diverging tastes of succeeding generations."<sup>1</sup>

In summarizing the relationship which exists between the drama of the Greeks and that of the savages, we see that the basis for the comparison is a twofold one: the myth and the dance. In the myth we find the context; in the dance the action which binds these two stages together. The chorus and the actors show a great deal of similarity in both the high and low civilizations, for they arose out of the large body of worshippers who could not, in the nature of the case, perform the elaborate ceremonials laid down; hence this special group was given the office. However important these things may be in elucidating this relationship, the real emphasis should be laid on the fact that a strong religious element prevails in much of

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Donaldson, "Theatre of the Greeks," p. 7.

the savage drama and throughout the entire Greek period. And what is more, the purpose at the beginning, in each case, was the same, namely, that of presenting, through the agency of sympathetic magic, petitions to those gods who held material well-being in their hands. As time advanced this very materialistic idea disappeared from the Greek drama and a more spiritual religious idea took its place, but with the savage the wants of this world were too pressing to give way to a form which could only appear on a stage of higher culture.

The sun plays an important part, we have seen, in the early drama of the savages and of the Greeks. In Japan, too, according to some reports, the origin of the drama lies in a myth connected with the worship of the sun. A single legend is, of course, insufficient to account for the origin of the drama, since the nature of art precludes its being thus invented; yet it is interesting in showing the close connection of the drama with religion.<sup>1</sup> The first account which we find of this legend is in the *Kojiki*, written in 712 A.D., where these *Nō* plays are described as being ancient and their origin asso-

<sup>1</sup> K. Mantzius, "History of Theatrical Art," Vol. I, p. 48.

ciated with the sun goddess. It is to be noticed that the sun is a goddess and not a god, as in Greece. "The mythical story of their (the 'Nō' plays) origin is one of the well known tales of Japan. The sun goddess, Amaterasu, was offended and retired to a cave, withdrawing her luminous beauty from the world. As may be imagined, this was very inconvenient for every one, including the rest of the gods, who in their distress assembled on the dry bed of the River of Heavens. (This is the Milky Way, and to one who knows the mountain rivers of Japan it gives a very telling little touch, for the dry bed of a Japanese river is a broad curve of round white stones.) They endeavoured in many ways to lure the sun goddess out of her cave, and at last they invented a dance and performed it on top of an inverted empty tub, which echoed when the dancer stamped. This excited her curiosity, and the goddess was successfully drawn out of her hiding-place, the light of her radiance once more blessed the earth, and all was right again with gods and men. The stamping on the hollow tub is still suggested in the dancing of the 'Nō,' where the actor raises his foot and stamps<sup>1</sup> once or twice with force enough to

<sup>1</sup> See the Snake Dance of the Hopi Indians, Ch. III.

make the specially prepared wooden floor of the stage echo with a characteristic sound.”<sup>1</sup>

But it is not alone in its origin that we can compare the theatre of the Japanese with that of the Greeks and the savages. In Japan “men and women are forbidden on the same stage. The men were formerly not only given the outward semblance of women by every contrivance which the costumier and coiffeur could supply, but they were required to spend their lives from childhood in feminine costume and society that their masculine proclivities might be as far as possible obliterated.”<sup>2</sup> This does not mean, however, that women did not act in some plays, for they did, but never with members of the opposite sex.<sup>3</sup> The actors never appeared without masks, which were very elaborate.

As in Greece, the profession of acting was a noble one. “With the sole exception of the Emperor himself, every great personage took part in the performance; a stage was erected within the precincts of the Palace; costumes

<sup>1</sup> M. C. Stopes, “Plays of Old Japan — The ‘Nō,’” pp. 8 ff.; F. Brinkley, “Japan, Its History, Art and Literature,” Vol. III, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> O. Edwards, “Japanese Plays and Playfellows,” p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> In China the female parts were usually taken by men, but not from any religious reason. In India the female parts were taken by women. K. Mantzius, “History of Theatrical Art,” Vol. I, pp. 43, 81.



of the costliest and most beautiful materials were provided, and a collection of such garments as well as of masks and other accessories for the 'Nō' was counted an essential part of every aristocratic mansion's furniture. By degrees the practice of the art became a profession, but princes, nobles and high officials did not cease to study it assiduously, and were prepared at any moment to organize performances or to take part in them.<sup>1</sup> It need scarcely be said that various schools came into existence. At first, although Buddhist priests had taken such a large share in developing the 'Nō,' Shinto shrines continued to be the principal scenes of its performance, the dance being then a ceremony of worship. But from the days of the Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimitsu (1368-1394) it underwent popularization, and without losing its moral character, received an extension of motive, becoming an adjunct of congratulatory or commemorative occasions and even a pure diversion."<sup>2</sup>

"The tone of pessimism that pervades the

<sup>1</sup> In China the actors occupied a low rank. The law forbids the sons of actors, barbers and slaves entering for state examinations. K. Mantzius, "History of Theatrical Art," Vol. I, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> F. Brinkley, "Japan, Its History, Art and Literature," Vol. III, pp. 29 ff.

drama is characteristic of all the 'Nō' composed during the military epoch, and has been interpreted as proving their priestly authorship. Some learned critics go so far as to assert that the laymen generally credited with having written the 'Nō' were really responsible, not for the text, but only for the music, the dances, and the staging, the text being furnished by Buddhist priests, who employed it as a vehicle for inculcating the instability of life, metempsychosis, the circle of fate, the chain of existences, and other religious doctrines. Certainly the dramas offer internal evidence of the truth of that theory."<sup>1</sup>

Thus we see that here, too, religion is the dominant motive, but, as in Greece, the text of the plays is not of a religious character. In Japan, as elsewhere in the Orient, those things which come down to the people from the past are especially sacred, since they are connected with the ancestors; and as such they are to be reverently regarded. The religious idea is also brought out in the fact that the Japanese plays are performed at night, not because it is cooler, but as a survival of the time when they honored

<sup>1</sup> F. Brinkley, "Japan, Its History, Art and Literature," Vol. III, p. 48.

their gods in mystic dances by moonlight or torchlight, as do the savages.<sup>1</sup>

In two respects at least the drama of the Japanese differs from that of the savage. In the first place "the actors do not perform many evolutions on the stage, and though their movements are in harmony with the story to some extent, they tend to remain more or less in their relative positions."<sup>2</sup> With the savage the entire interest of the play depends upon the action rather than the lines, which are in many cases entirely lacking, while in these 'Nō' plays the lines, which are usually in a poetic form, are the principal things which hold the attention of the audience. However, what movement of the body they do have, is prescribed and regulated according to the severest rules. Every step and motion, even of the toes and little fingers in the dance, is strictly governed by iron tradition, and the secret of some parts is only in the hands of a few masters.<sup>3</sup> The second difference is that there are on the Japanese stage "no stage properties of any kind, just as there is no scenery and the images of the places in which the action

<sup>1</sup> K. Mantzius, "History of Theatrical Art," Vol. I, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> M. C. Stopes, "Plays of Old Japan — The 'Nō'," p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> M. C. Stopes, *loc. cit.*, p. 6.

lies must be evolved in their own minds by the spectators, guided by the descriptive passages of the play. So also there are no appliances. If the actors, for instance, have to enter a boat and be rowed across a stream, they will perhaps merely step over a bamboo pole. If one of the characters has to ladle up water and offer it to a fainting warrior, the whole action is accomplished with a fan."<sup>1</sup> We know that both on the Greek stage and on that of the savage the use of properties of all kinds was thought indispensable in creating the illusion. The Greeks even went so far as to introduce horses and chariots on the stage.<sup>2</sup>

The Japanese do not lack the chorus, but the part they play is of minor consideration. They are seated at the back of the stage, but do not take part in the dancing. They do, however, accompany the dance with flute and drum and from time to time intone the words of the drama.<sup>3</sup> We know how prominent a part the chorus played in the Greek drama, but there the singing and dancing were done by one body. In this respect the chorus of the Japanese resembles

<sup>1</sup> M. C. Stopes, "Plays of Old Japan — The 'Nō'," p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> Brinkley, "Japan, Its History, Art and Literature," p. 28.

many of the savage choruses of the women who are seated off the stage and whose function is beating time and singing. All three dramas show a resemblance in the use of the musical instruments. The Greeks had the flute and sometimes the lyre;<sup>1</sup> the savages usually had the drum, or modifications of it;<sup>2</sup> while the Japanese had both.

From this discussion there is one conclusion which stands out above all others, and that is that the dramas of the Greeks and the Japanese, although very highly developed in their literature and art, must have resembled in their earlier stages the dramatic rites and ceremonies of those savage peoples with whom this book, as a study of earlier stages of social evolution, is dealing. It is true that there must have been many intermediate steps, of which we have no record, between the crude sympathetic magic ceremonies of a people such as the Australians, and the plays of Sophocles, or the present 'Nō' drama. But despite this absence of a full series of transitional forms, but little doubt should remain that there obtains, in the growth of the drama, the same development of form out of

<sup>1</sup> Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> Grosse, "The Beginnings of Art," pp. 278 ff.

form, in a connected series, which characterizes the process of evolution elsewhere in nature and in society. Grosse says, "Strange and inartistic as the primitive forms of art sometimes appear at the first sight, as soon as we examine them more closely we find that they are formed according to the same laws as govern the highest creations of art."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Grosse, "The Beginnings of Art," p. 307.

*INITIATION CEREMONIES*





## CHAPTER V

### *INITIATION CEREMONIES*

**A**MONG most savage peoples when a boy reaches the age of puberty the time has arrived for him to leave the company of women, with whom he has been living, and join himself to the men. However, before he can do this, he must be taught many things, among them the secrets and moral code of the tribe or totem into which he is to enter as a full-fledged member. This education is accomplished largely through more or less elaborate ceremonies, many of which are of a dramatic nature, especially in those communities where the totem holds a prominent place. As a rule, the rite of circumcision is performed, thus making the boy, as they think, a more fit member of society. This time is the most important in the life of a youth, for announcement is made to the world that he is no longer a child, but has reached that age when he is fit to take up a man's estate and perform the functions for which he was intended. In Aus-

tralia these puberty initiatory rites occupy much of the time of the people which is not spent in the actual getting of food. The ceremonies begin when the boy is between ten and twelve years old and are not concluded until he has reached the age of twenty-five or thirty.<sup>1</sup> In many other parts of the world, however, the rites are of shorter duration, sometimes occupying only a few days.

A close analogy exists between these ceremonies and the morality plays of the Middle Ages. In the latter the actors impersonated the various virtues and vices. In nearly all cases good triumphed over evil; in others the Devil was the victor. The idea was to show the people what would happen to them if they gave way to their passions, and what would be the reward if virtue prevailed. So it was that the moral teachers of both the civilized man and the savage resorted to the stage in order to keep their followers in the narrow path.

The Greeks early recognized the educative effect of the theatre not only for the youth, but also for the older people. "In Lucian's Dialogue, Solon tells Anacharsis that the Athenians edu-

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," p. 213.

cate their sons by taking them to tragedies and comedies and showing them examples of virtue and vice, so as to teach them what to avoid.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand Aristotle does not feel that the theatre should be used as a school,<sup>2</sup> for its function is religious. Books were few and their use was confined to a very limited class of people. The result was that the ordinary Athenian depended almost entirely for his literary pleasures upon public performances and recitations of poetical compositions.<sup>3</sup>

Up to the age of puberty the Australian youth has had practically no systematic instruction, and so his schooling really begins at the age when most civilized children are supposed to be well grounded in the so-called fundamentals. “The knowledge is conveyed to him in a most effective manner by means of elaborate ceremonies of a dramatic nature, performed by members of the different totems and intended to picture events in the life of the mythic ancestral individuals who lived in the ancient time — half-animal creations whose descendants are the present members of the tribe. Thus,

<sup>1</sup> Haigh, “The Attic Theatre,” p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, “Poetics,” VI, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Haigh, “The Attic Theatre,” p. 4.

performances which seem on the outside merely imitations of the actions of different animals are really part of the instruction of the novice in the sacred lore connected with the totems and the ancestors of the various clans.”<sup>1</sup>

Another phase of these ceremonies is to teach the novice in a most vivid fashion those things which in the future he must avoid, that is, introduce him to the *mores* of the tribe. For this reason many of the rites are almost equivalent to a morality play. At first sight some of the performances seem to be very immoral, being presented on the principle of *similia similibus curantur*. Those men who guard the boys talk to each other in an inverted language, so that the real meaning is just the opposite of what they say. At the end of every sentence the

<sup>1</sup> H. Webster, “Primitive Secret Societies,” pp. 140-1.

“The art of the Australian is not constructive, not architectonic, not graphic, but dramatic and mimetic. Every writer who has direct knowledge of the Australian corroborees, whether occasional and secular, or state and ceremonial, testifies to the remarkable interest shown in dramatic representation. The reproduction by dances of the movements and behavior of the animals of the chase is startling. Great humor is also shown in adopting and reproducing recent events and personal traits. These performances are attended with high emotional attacks; and all the accompaniments of decoration, song, music, spectators’ shouts, etc., are designed to revive the feelings appropriate to the immediate conflicting situations which mean so much to the savage.” (John Dewey, “The Psychological Review,” 9: pp. 217-230; Thomas, “Source Book for Social Origins,” pp. 182-3.)

speaker adds "Yah," which negatives all that has been said and done. Indeed the use of the word "Yah" runs through the whole conversation carried on during the ceremonies.<sup>1</sup> "The lads are told that this is done in order that they may learn to speak the truth. Various offences against morality are exhibited and the guardians warn the novices of their death or of violence, should they attempt to repeat the actions which they have just witnessed. There are many obscene gestures for the purpose of shocking the young fellows; and if the latter show the least sign of mirth or frivolity, they are hit on the head by an old man who is appointed to watch them."<sup>2</sup> In one ceremony four or five of the old men sit on the ground making mud pies. The guardian of the boys says to them, "Look at that! Look at those old men, when you get back to the camp, go and do like that, and play with little children — Yah!"<sup>3</sup>

Among practically all savage peoples when any sacred rites are to take place the women are not only excluded from the more prominent of them, but they are also kept in ignorance of what occurs. If by any chance the women should

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Howitt, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," p. 533.

<sup>2</sup> Webster, *loc cit.*, pp. 49 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Howitt, *loc. cit.*, p. 534.

appear at the place where the ceremony is being held, they would probably be killed.<sup>1</sup> They are told that the initiation is the work of the tribal gods. "Bull-roarers"<sup>2</sup> are swung in the bushes, and the ground is beaten by the men with pieces of bark. The women are deceived into believing that the noise is caused by the trampling of an evil spirit who has come to remove the boys. The sound of the bull-roarer is his voice.<sup>3</sup> But not alone to the savage people does the bull-roarer belong. It was used by the ancient Greeks in their initiation ceremonies to simulate the voice of the thunder-god — Rhombos.<sup>4</sup> This latter idea is prevalent in the central part of Australia. Miss Harrison says: "To us a thunderstorm is mainly a thing of terror, a thing to be avoided, a thing 'not to go out in.' We get abundant and superabundant rain without thunderstorms. But an occasional drought broken up by thunderstorms helps us to realize what thunder and the bull-

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Howitt, "Native Tribes of Southeast Australia," p. 637.

<sup>2</sup> Bull-roarer = a piece of wood with a string looped around one end which, when swung, gives a humming sound.

<sup>3</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," pp. 214-17, 219, 222, 223-6, 227, 260, 372-3; Webster, "Primitive Secret Societies," p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Harrison, "Themis," p. 61; Lang, "Custom and Myth," pp. 36, 51 ff.

roarer, which makes thunder, mean to the Central Australian, where a 'thunderstorm causes the desert to blossom as the rose truly as if by magic.' The thunder, as the headman said, 'caused the rain to fall and everything to grow up new.' Now we realize its virtue in the adolescence rite; it gives the boys 'more power,' they not only grow up, but grow up new. The bull-roarer is as it were the rite incarnate. The bull-roarer is the vehicle not of a god or even of a spirit, but of unformulated uncanny force, what Mr. Lang calls a 'powerful Awful.'" <sup>1</sup>

In Australia when the boy reaches the age of puberty the elders of the tribe undertake his initiation. He is conducted to a spot near the main camp, where the members of the group are gathered. Here the men throw him up in the air several times, while the women dance around singing. Then the boy's chest and back are painted with various totemic designs. Meanwhile he is told that the ceremony just passed through will promote his growth to manhood and that henceforth he must not play with the women or girls, but must come to live with the men in their camp. He is further instructed that under no circumstances must surprise or fear be mani-

<sup>1</sup> Harrison, "Themis," p. 65.

fested, nor by word or deed show that he is conscious of what is going on, yet that he must narrowly observe everything, and remember all he sees and hears.<sup>1</sup> He is also told that he must never mention to a woman what he is about to see, for if he does, the ancestral spirits will be angry with him.

These initiation ceremonies of the Australians are strictly religious in character, and although this element seems at times to be subservient to the dramatic, nevertheless it is present and is the controlling factor. The boys are not only by this graphic art taught the history of the past, but they are also instructed in the methods to be used in order to obtain a goodly food supply. When it is remembered that these people feel that unless a ceremony is performed exactly in the way prescribed the efficacy is lost, it will be clear why so much stress is laid on teaching them to the boys.

Briefly put, then, the purpose of these ceremonies is to make the youths worthy members of the community, according to their standards. "Certain principles are impressed upon them for their guidance during life — for instance, to listen and obey the old men; generously to

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Howitt, "Native Tribes of Southeast Australia," p. 592.



share the fruits of the chase with others, especially with their kindred; not to interfere with the women of the tribe, particularly those who are related to them, nor to injure their kindred (in its widest sense) by means of evil magic. Before the novice is permitted to take his place in the community, marry and join in its councils, he must possess those qualifications which will enable him to act for the common welfare.”<sup>1</sup>

As has been said, one object of these ceremonies is to scare the boys into obedience to the elder men of the tribe. In Australia this is partially done by the bull-roarers, which when heard in the distance are said to be the voice of the gods telling the boys to obey. The Fijian elders, who lack these bull-roarers, have adopted another means. The boys are led by the old men into the open space before the temple, where a horrible spectacle meets their eyes. “Near the outer entrance, with his back to the Temple, sits the chief priest, regarding them with a fixed stare; and between him and them lie a row of dead men, covered with blood, their bodies apparently cut open and their entrails protruding. The *Vere*<sup>2</sup> steps over them one by

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Howitt, “Native Tribes of Southeast Australia,” p. 638.

<sup>2</sup> *Vere* = old man.

one and the awestruck youths follow him until they stand in a row before the high priest, their 'souls drying up' under his strong glare. Suddenly he blurts out a great yell, whereupon the dead men start to their feet, and run down to the river to cleanse themselves from the blood and filth with which they are besmeared."<sup>1</sup>

Among the Bushmen so important are the dances thought to be that when a boy is initiated into any of the secret groups he receives elaborate instruction in them. There are numerous examples of where a person has been asked certain questions about tribal matters and he has answered, "I do not dance that dance," meaning that he had not been initiated into those particular secrets of the tribe or group.<sup>2</sup>

In commenting on these initiation ceremonies, Mr. W. I. Thomas says: Races that are low in the scale of civilization make, recite, and act poems and dramas. "It is perhaps true that there is not a lower race in existence to-day than the Central Australians and yet among them Mr. Baldwin Spencer and Mr. F. J. Gillen were present on the occasion of the gatherings in connection with the initiation of the young men,

<sup>1</sup> Webster, *loc. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Lang, "Myth, Ritual, and Religion," Vol. I, p. 175; Vol. II, p. 12.

commencing in the middle of September and lasting until the middle of the following January, during which time there was a constant succession of essentially dramatic ceremonies, not a day passing without one, while there were sometimes as many as five or six during the twenty-four hours. These ceremonies or *quabara* related to the wanderings of the Alcheringa, or mythical ancestors of the tribe; each ceremony was the property of some individual who either made it himself or inherited it from some one — generally a father or elder brother — and it could be acted only by his permission. A single instance will suffice to illustrate the crude but dramatic character of these performances: the men were supposed to represent two eagle-hawks quarreling over a piece of flesh, which was represented by the downy mass in one man's mouth. At first they remained squatting on their shields, moving their arms up and down; and still continuing this action, which was supposed to represent the flapping of wings, they jumped off the shields, and with their bodies bent up and arms extended and flapping, began circling around each other as if each were afraid of coming to close quarters. They then stopped and moved a step or two at a time,

first to one side and then to the other, until finally they came to close quarters and began fighting with their heads for the possession of the piece of meat. . . . The attacking man at length seized with his teeth the piece of meat and wrenched it out of the other man's mouth. The acting in this ceremony was especially good, the actions and movements of the birds being admirably presented, and the whole scene with the decorated men in front and the group of interested natives in the background was by no means devoid of picturesqueness."<sup>1</sup>

The wolf ritual among the Nootka Indians of North America was a dramatic performance representing the capture of the novices by the wolves, their recapture from the wolves, the exorcism of the wolf spirits that they might have brought back with them, and the performance of dances that the novices were supposed to have been taught by the wolves.<sup>2</sup> "The Nootka tradition runs that this secret society was instituted by wolves who took away a chief's son and tried to kill him, but, failing to do so,

<sup>1</sup> W. I. Thomas, "Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago," First Series 4: pp. 241-56; Thomas, "Source Book for Social Origins," pp. 290-91; Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," pp. 296-7.

<sup>2</sup> Sapir, "Some Aspects of the Nootka Language and Culture," *American Anthropologist*, January-March, 1911.

became his friends, taught him the rites of the society and ordered him to teach them to his friends on his return home. They then carried the young man back to his village. They also begged that whenever he moved from one place to another he would kindly leave behind him some red cedar-bark to be used by them in their own ceremonies; and to this custom the Nootka tribes still adhere. Every new member of the society must be initiated by the wolves. At night a pack of wolves, impersonated by Indians dressed in wolf-skins and wearing wolf-masks, make their appearance, seize the novice, and carry him into the woods. When the wolves are heard outside the village, coming to fetch away the novice, all the members of the society blacken their faces and sing. Next day the wolves bring back the novice dead, and the members of the society have to revive him. The wolves are supposed to have put a magic stone into his body, which must be removed before he can come to life. Till this is done the pretended corpse is left lying outside the house. Two wizards go and remove the stone, which appears to be quartz, and then the novice is resuscitated.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Boas, *Sixth Report on Northwestern Tribes of Canada*, p. 47; Frazer, “*Golden Bough*,” Vol. III, 1900, pp. 434-5; “*Narratives of the Adventures and Sufferings of John N. Jewett*,” p. 119.

In the first part of this legend is to be noticed a fact which we have tried to bring out several times before, and that is, in so many of the savage legends connected with the ceremonies a human being by some means or other reaches the place either in this or the future world where he is taught the way in which the ceremony should be performed. He then returns and instructs his fellowmen, who in their turn incorporate into their drama the story of his wanderings.

There are also in this legend embodied other ideas common among many tribes. They believe that when a youth passes from boyhood to manhood he enters an entirely different state — a rebirth. In order to accomplish this he is supposed either to die a natural death, or be killed, and when he is revived, he is thought incapable of remembering anything that happened before.<sup>1</sup> “Such rites become intelligible if one supposes that their substance consists in extracting the youth’s soul in order to transform it to his totem. For the extraction of his soul would naturally be supposed to kill the youth or at least to throw him into a deathlike trance, which the savage

<sup>1</sup> A similar ceremony also occurs among the natives on the Congo River. Keane, “Man Past and Present,” p. 109.

hardly distinguishes from death. His recovery would then be attributed either to the gradual recovery of his system from the violent shock which it had received, or, more probably, to the infusion into him of fresh life drawn from the totem. Thus the essence of these initiatory rites, so far as they consist in a simulation of death and resurrection, would be an exchange of life or souls between the man and his totem.”<sup>1</sup>

In New South Wales the night previous to the initiation ceremony is devoted to a corroboree. One member of the tribe will mimic the actions of an emu which some of the others pretend to hunt; another will endeavor to imitate a dingo, and all appear to thoroughly enjoy the rude dramatic attempt.<sup>2</sup> After the boys have been taken into the bush for initiation, there are many pantomimic performances. Sometimes the animal imitated is the kangaroo — the men hopping along one after the other. The iguana is represented by men crawling along on the ground, moving their hands and feet like that animal. Various other animals and birds are mimicked.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frazer, "Golden Bough," Vol. III, 1900, p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> Cameron, "Tribes of New South Wales," 14 J. A. I., p. 358.

<sup>3</sup> R. H. Matthews, "Keeparra Ceremony of Initiation," 26 J. A. I., p. 331.

The purpose here is the same as among the Australians, of dramatically setting forth the myths and legends which concern the totemic ancestral animals of the past.

"In connection with the initiation into the bear totem in northwestern America there was held quite a theatrical performance. A lance was prepared which had a very sharp point so arranged that the slightest pressure on its tip would cause the steel to gradually sink into the shaft. In sight of the multitude crowding the lodge, this lance was pressed in the bare chest of the candidate and apparently sunk in his body to the shaft, when he would tumble down simulating death. At the same time a quantity of blood, previously kept in the mouth, would issue from the would-be corpse, making it quite clear to the uninitiated gazers-on that the terrible knife had had its effect, when lo! upon one of the actors striking up one of the chants specially made for the circumstance and richly paid for, the candidate would gradually rise up a new man."<sup>1</sup> The Dakota Indians practice a rite very similar to this in which the

<sup>1</sup> A. G. Morice, in *Transactions of the Canadian Institute*, Vol. IV (1892-3), pp. 203-6; Frazer, "Golden Bough," 1900, Vol. III, pp. 438-9.



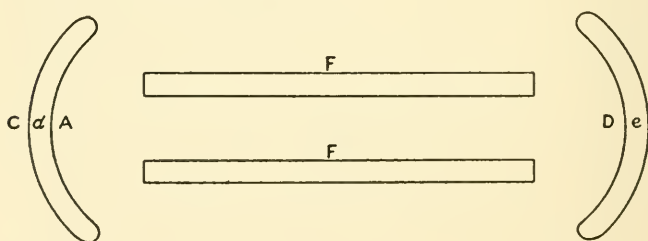
candidate is revived after having been knocked down by a blow.<sup>1</sup>

The Mandans of the Plains held an annual religious ceremony which had several distinct objects. "One was the dancing of the bull-dance, a magical practice, by the strict performance of which a supply of buffalo would be secured for the coming season. In the bull-dance, the performers were covered with the skins of different animals, the heads of the latter serving as masks. The dancers impersonated what were doubtless the totemic animals of their clans — bears, swans, wolves — and in their performances imitated the actions and habits of the animals and chanted peculiar and appropriate songs known to the performers alone. Such totemic representations, like the Arunta *Quabara* were the strictly guarded property of those who by initiation were entitled to give them. A second object was for 'the purpose of conducting all the young men of the tribe, as they annually arrive at the age of manhood, through an ordeal of privation and torture, which, while it is supposed to harden the muscles and prepare them for extreme endurance, enables

<sup>1</sup> G. H. Pond, "Dakota Superstitions," Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society for 1867, pp. 35, 37-40; Frazer, "Golden Bough," 1900, Vol. III, p. 433.

the chiefs who are spectators to the scene, to decide upon their comparative bodily strength and ability to endure the extreme privations and sufferings that often fall to the lot of Indian warriors; and that they may decide who is the most hardy and best able to lead a war-party in case of extreme exigency.'"<sup>1</sup> Before being finally admitted, the young men are submitted to the most terrible tortures in order to try their courage.<sup>2</sup>

In Australia for the most elaborate of the initiation ceremonies there is a large piece of ground which is cleared and then laid out with banks of dirt and brakes of bushes. The following is the plan for the stage setting of one of these Initiatory Dramas.



- A. Place where the men sit.
- C. Place where the women dance.
- D. Place where the operation is carried out.

<sup>1</sup> S. Catlin, "Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians," Vol. I, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Webster, *loc. cit.*, pp. 183-5.

- d. Brake made of bushes in front of which the men sit.
- e. Brake behind which the novice sits.
- F. Banks of dirt with pathway between.

After being painted, the boy is made to crouch behind his brake and told not to cast his eyes upon the actors unless so instructed. All the first night the dancing and singing is continued with great vigor. In the morning the men sing a fire song while the boy's future mother-in-law presents him with a burning stick, and while so doing, admonishes him always to hold fast to his own fire—in other words, not to interfere with women assigned to other men. The boy is then taken out into the bushes, where he is left for three days to reflect upon the fact that he is to enter the state of manhood.

On the night of the fourth day two men go to the brake of the boy, to which he has previously been brought, tie a bandage over his eyes and bring him out between the banks of dirt, where a ceremony is to take place. Here he is placed lying face downward until the two men who are going to perform the ceremony are in position between the banks. "When the boy is told by the old man who is instructing him, to

look, he sees lying in front of him and on his side a man who, his teacher tells him, represents a wild dog. At the other end of the stage a decorated man stands with legs wide apart holding up twigs of eucalyptus in each hand, and having his head ornamented with a small Waninga, which is a sacred object emblematic of some totem animal, in this particular case a kangaroo. This man moves his head from side to side as if looking for something and every now and then uttering a sound similar to that made by a kangaroo, which animal he is supposed to represent. Suddenly the dog looks up, sees the kangaroo, begins barking and running on all fours, passing between the man's legs and lying down behind the man, who keeps watching him over his shoulder. Then the dog runs again between the kangaroo-man's legs, but this time he is caught and well shaken and a pretence is made of dashing his head against the ground, whereupon he howls as if in pain. These movements are repeated several times, and finally the dog is supposed to be killed by the kangaroo. The boy is told by the old man that the scene represents an incident which took place in past ages when a kangaroo-man attacked a wild dog-man and killed the latter. This is the

first of the totemic myths to which the boy is introduced.<sup>1</sup>

"On the fifth day, in the afternoon, another performance, in which two kangaroos and one dog figure, is given. The kangaroos wear, as before, a small Waninga in their hair and this time carry between their teeth and also in their hair, bunches of wooden shavings soaked in blood, which are supposed to represent the wounds received from the bites of the dogs. The performance is essentially similar to that of the previous day, and the antics of the dog as he runs round and looks up, barking at the kangaroo or howling lustily as his head is bumped against the ground brings smiles to every face except that of the *Wurtja*.<sup>2</sup>

"On the sixth day the *Wurtja* is taken out hunting by the men. In the evening while sitting behind his brake he hears songs which refer to the wanderings of the ancestors. It must be remembered that it is now for the first time that the boy hears anything of these traditions and sees the ceremonies performed, in which the ancestors of the tribe are represented as they were, and acting as they did during life.

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "native tribes of Central Australia." p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> *Wurtja* = the boy who is being initiated.

These plays are as a school for the boys, in which they receive practically all their education."

A necessary part of the ceremony consists in showing to the novices certain dances, the important and common feature of which is, that they represent special totemic animals. In the Arunta tribe, however, they have a very definite meaning. "At the first glance it looks much as if all that they were intended to represent was the behaviour of certain animals, but in reality they have a much deeper meaning, for each performer represents an ancestral individual who lived in the Alcheringa.<sup>1</sup> He was a member of a group of individuals, all of whom, just like himself, were the direct descendants or transformations of the animals, the names of which they bore. It is as a reincarnation of the never-dying spirit part of one of these semi-animal ancestors that every member of the tribe is born, and therefore, when born, he or she bears of necessity the name of the animal or plant of which the Alcheringa ancestor was a transformation or descendant.

"It is in this way that the boy during the initiation ceremonies is instructed for the first time in any of the sacred matters referring to

<sup>1</sup> Alcheringa = mythical past.

the totems, and it is by means of the performances which are concerned with certain animals, or rather, apparently with these animals, but in reality with the Alcheringa individuals who were the direct transformations of such animals, that the traditions dealing with this subject, which is of the greatest importance in the eyes of the natives, are firmly impressed upon the mind of the novice, to whom everything which he sees and hears is new and surrounded with an air of mystery.”<sup>1</sup>

The next two ceremonies, those of circumcision and subincision, take place at intervals of six weeks. These being performed, the novice is regarded as an initiated member of the tribe and may take part in all the sacred ceremonies of his group, though it is not until he has passed through the fire ceremony which occurs some years later that he is regarded as a fully developed man. For this a large fire is made, on which are placed green branches. The boy is forced to lie on these, and although the heat and smoke are stifling, he must stay for four or five minutes. The purpose is to make the boys more hardy and to impart to them courage and

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, “Native Tribes of Central Australia,” pp. 224 ff.

wisdom.<sup>1</sup> It may be that the purifying influence of fire and smoke is recognized, for we find that all over the world fire plays an important part in religious ceremonies.

In the New Guinea initiation ceremonies masked men of the tribe dress in draperies of grass and act the parts of various gods. The boys are led into the wilderness and brought into the presence of the mountain god, who delivers an impressive address to the frightened lads. The purport is, that he will be their friend if they obey the elders, but if they disobey, the most direful penalties in the shape of disease and death will overtake them.<sup>2</sup> The main object seems to be to keep the youths under the control of the old men. They do not realize that the men impersonate the gods and so believe everything that they are told. Here the drama acts as a school of obedience for the boys, which they think is in the hands of the gods.

One of the cleverest and most interesting of these initiation ceremonies is reported from the Bismarck Archipelago. A spirit called Duk-Duk assumes a visible form and makes its appearance

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," pp. 224 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Webster, "Primitive Secret Societies," pp. 101-102.



at stated intervals, which always occur on the first day of a new moon. It is announced a month beforehand by the old men, to one of whom it is said to belong. During that month great preparations of food are made, and should any young man have failed to provide an adequate supply on the occasion of its last appearance, he receives a pretty strong hint that Duk-Duk is displeased with him, with the result that there is no second offence. When it is remembered that the old men, who alone have the power of summoning the Duk-Duk from his house at the bottom of the sea, are too weak to provide themselves with food, the reason for this hint is obvious. Before the arrival of the Duk-Duk the women disappear, for it is death for a woman to look upon this unquiet spirit. Before daybreak all the men are assembled on the beach, the young ones looking very frightened, for they know that the Duk-Duk is aware of all their shortcomings for the last month. "At the first streak of dawn, singing and drum-beating is heard out at sea, and, as soon as there is enough light to see them, five or six canoes, lashed together with a platform built over them, are seen to be slowly advancing towards the beach. Two most extraordinary

figures appear dancing on the platform, uttering shrill cries, like a small dog yelping. They seem to be about ten feet high, but so rapid are their movements that it is difficult to observe them carefully. However, the outward and visible form assumed by them is intended to represent a gigantic cassowary, with the most hideous and grotesque of human faces. The dress, which is made of the leaves of the *dracoenae*, certainly looks much like the body of this bird, but the head is like nothing but the head of a Duk-Duk. It is a conical shaped erection, about five feet high, made of very fine basket work, and gummed all over to give a surface on which the diabolical countenance is depicted. No arms or hands are visible and the dress extends down to the knees. The old men, doubtless, are in the secret, but by the alarmed look on the faces of the others, it is easy to see that they imagine that there is nothing human about these alarming visitors. As soon as the canoes touch the beach, the two Duk-Duks jump out, and at once the natives fall back so as to avoid touching them. If a Duk-Duk is touched, even by accident, he very frequently kills the unfortunate native on the spot. After landing, the Duk-Duks dance around each other, imitat-

ing the ungainly motion of the cassowary and uttering their shrill cries. During the whole of their stay they make no sound but this. It would never do for them to speak, for in that case, they might be recognized by their voices. Nothing more is to be done now till evening, and they occupy their time running up and down the beach, through the village, and into the bush, and seem to be very fond of turning up in the most unexpected manner, and frightening the natives half out of their wits. During the day a little house has been built for the Duk-Duk's benefit. No one but the old men knows exactly where this house is, as it is carefully concealed. Here one may suppose the restless spirit unbends to a certain extent and has his meals. Certainly no one would venture to disturb him. In the evening a vast pile of food is collected and is borne off by the old men into the bush, every man making his contribution to the meal. The Duk-Duk, if satisfied, maintains a complete silence, but if he does not think the amount collected sufficient, he shows his disapprobation by yelping and leaping." In order to prepare their minds for the mysteries of the Duk-Duk, the boys are beaten with sticks until the blood flows freely. On the last day that the moon is

visible, the Duk-Duk disappears as silently as he came and thus the mystery is kept up. At frequent intervals the man who has impersonated the spirit leaves his costume in the woods and mixes with the people of the village so that they will not suspect that one of their number is taking the part. He even adds his supply of food to the general contribution.<sup>1</sup>

One very clear point of difference presents itself here between this initiation and that of the boys in Australia. In the latter the boys receive their instruction in practically all the ways of life through the ceremonies, but the subjection of the boys through fear is a minor element, while in the Bismarck Archipelago fear plays the most important rôle. This purpose is very effective during the entire period of adolescence and often lasts far into manhood before they learn that it was a member of their own tribe who took the part of the Duk-Duk. While of course it is important that the older men of the tribe should have control over the

<sup>1</sup> Webster, *loc. cit.*, pp. 111-114; G. Brown, "Melanesians and Polynesians," pp. 60-72. The drama here has assumed a practical turn and might almost be put under the "Food Ceremonies," for by means of it the old men of the tribe get enough on which to live very comfortably; but because it has the other purpose of initiating the boys, it is thought best to put it in here.

youths, even though it is obtained through fear, yet it is a question whether the method adopted by the Australians of obtaining control through respect for learning is not really in the end more effective. There the youths are kept in the training school until they are nearly twenty-five years old and it is only natural that the respect which exists in other places of pupil for teacher should dominate the relationship even among the savages.

Numerous other instances of these initiation ceremonies could be cited, practiced by peoples the world over. In all of them the same fundamental elements appear. They serve to introduce the boys when they have reached the age of puberty into the myths and history of their tribe and totem. They act as a school for them, and, among many peoples, they are the agency through which they receive their first moral teachings. Again, the boys are taught to respect and obey the elders of the tribe, who frighten them into thinking that their commands are the orders of the gods. All such fundamental ideas are conveyed to the youths by means of dramatic representations.



*DRAMATIC WAR CEREMONIES*





## CHAPTER VI

### *DRAMATIC WAR CEREMONIES*

**I**N the preceding chapters we have discussed at length the ways and means that savage man has adopted for dealing with the spirit world. Through the plant and the animal ceremonies he hopes to keep up the supply of the important elements of his daily sustenance. By coercing the spirits ruling the sun and rain, he endeavors to obtain an equilibrium between these two essential factors of life. However, we have not as yet mentioned some of the means by which, on certain occasions, the primitive man endeavors to secure the assistance of the spirits in dealing with human beings like himself. We have left this until now because it does not play such an important part in savage life. As a rule the man of low culture feels better able to cope alone with individuals of his own kind whom he can see and hear than he does with that vast unseen horde of spirits about him. His relationship with his fellowman is not so dependent upon the aleatory, the unreckonable element, as

are his dealings with the members of the other world. Hence it is only under extraordinary circumstances that a man will call upon the gods for help in dealing with human beings, for he relies largely on past experience to help him. However, if there is a man whom, for some reason, the savage does not want to attack alone, he has recourse to sympathetic magic, by means of which he hopes to bring about his enemy's death or downfall. If he wishes to find the whereabouts of some enemy whom he thinks has done him a wrong, he asks the spirits to tell him. While these appeals are in a way dramatic, in that they are imitative, yet they lack definite human action and for that reason are only mentioned in passing. There is, however, one method employed by man in dealing with his own kind which is truly dramatic, and that is the war dance or ceremony which is performed among nearly all savage peoples the world over. The purpose for which it is enacted is twofold; first, to get the gods on their side in the fight, and second, to work themselves up to such a pitch of excitement that they will rush into the fray and show no mercy to any who may fall in their path.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. I. Thomas, "Sex and Society," p. 258.

In communities of low civilization there are manifold reasons for which the drama is performed, but, according to our view, only two of them really accomplish that for which they are intended. The first is to give pleasure, and the second, which is to be seen in these war ceremonies, is to induce a high degree of excitement. Without this latter element the savage wars would be very much less horrible than they are now.

The natives of Australia do not believe that such a thing as a natural death can occur, hence when any one dies, the person who killed him is always sought. A man or party of men who start to find such an one is called "Kurdaitcha." Before they go, a ceremony is performed to insure success. Five of the six men who take part are elaborately painted with various designs. In their hands they carry shields and either a spear-thrower, a boomerang or a spear. With very exaggerated high stepping, the four men appear on the place cleared for the ceremony. After dancing around for a few moments each lies down on the ground in as small a space as possible, and covers himself with his shield. Suddenly an old man appears armed only with a fighting club. He wanders around for some time

as though he were looking for the tracks of an animal. When his back is turned, the four men, who have by now risen from the ground, steal cautiously up behind him. Suddenly he turns and catches sight of the men who are about to kill him with one of their weapons. A mock fight ensues in which the old man kills all of the others. This is repeated several times until finally the "dead bodies" are heaped in front of him while he waves a club in the air. This play is based upon an actual occurrence which took place in the past, when a noted warrior, who was thought to have killed a man, was tracked on a hunting expedition by four Kurdaichas. With his greater strength he turned and killed them all.<sup>1</sup>

This is one of the few examples that we find in which the war ceremony is the acting out of an historical incident. As a rule, the plays deal only with the present, or rather, with the future and not with the past,<sup>2</sup> but so steeped are the Australians in that which has gone before that there are very few ceremonies which have not some reference to times gone by. This suggests

<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Gillen, "Native Tribes of Central Australia," pp. 476 ff.; Spencer and Gillen, "Across Australia."

<sup>2</sup> J. Harrison, "Themis," p. 44.

a rather interesting development in the evolution of a number of the savage ceremonies. Probably the first war dance that was given and the first mimic hunting scene which was enacted had as patterns a very definite war or hunt; but by constantly reacting the same scene, the specific incident was forgotten and the general idea of war or hunting took its place.<sup>1</sup>

In New South Wales the war dance is begun by the dancers dashing out and brandishing in the air clubs, spears, boomerangs and shields. This is followed by the men dividing into groups and then rushing at each other for a hand to hand conflict. One crowd of men is quickly driven off the field and are pursued into the dark by the victors. Howls, moans and the sound of striking clubs give the impression that a terrible massacre is taking place. The music for all of this has been wild and passionate and in perfect keeping with the bloody event which was being enacted. This event is, as a rule, followed by another dance in which the performers work themselves up to a high pitch of excitement by leaping wildly around the fire, keeping in time to the rapid beating of the drum.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Harrison, "Ancient Art and Ritual," p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> E. Grosse, "The Beginnings of Art," p. 219

It is not always necessary that a war be imminent in order that the savages may enjoy the pleasures of one of these wild dances. Often a tribe will go through a war ceremony for the exhilaration which is gotten out of it, or to entertain visitors. But no matter for what purpose the dance is given, whether as a rite before an actual war or merely for pleasure, it is carried out in a very serious manner and there is no more levity on a social occasion than there is when actual hostilities are threatened.

Mr. A. C. Haddon describes as follows a war dance which he witnessed on the Prince of Wales Island: "I was entertained with a war dance, a most interesting rehearsal of a dance which forty years ago would have commemorated some deed of valour or treachery. I gathered that such dances were never indulged in for mere amusement and were quite distinct from what may be termed the festival dance. It was evening on a sandy shore. Near a fire sat the primitive orchestra. The drums were beaten in a rhythmical monotone and a wailing chant accompanied them. Gradually from the far distance swarthy forms came, as it were, into focus, and marched along in twos or threes: then, in sinuous course, they performed their

evolutions, varying the celerity of their movements to the time of the weird singing. A mass of dried herbage thrown on the fire lighted up the scene and revealed a glowing picture of savagery. The bodies of the dancers were daubed and painted with ochre, and they wore various bits of colored cloth, beads, shells, etc. Leaves were worn in the armlets, in belt, etc.

"The dance illustrated the 'warpath,' the band of pretended warriors sometimes marching, more often skipping or stealthily stealing along, suddenly coming upon the foe with a 'Wahu!' Then they skipped two or three times, usually raising the right leg, brandishing their weapons at the same time. Again and again the dread 'Wahu!' sounded. This really effective manœuvre showed to yet greater advantage when, instead of being in rank, the men deployed in a semicircle facing the glaring fires, then, with their glittering eyes and gleaming teeth and the waving of bows and arrows and stone clubs, one realized how terrible to the lonely and surprised enemy must have been the 'Wahu!' of such a foe.

"The series of war dances concluded with an evolution in lively measure, evidently indicative of military success, as, with exultant cries, the

performers swayed their right hands. The dire significance of this last movement was not difficult to discover. It represented what formerly occurred after a successful foray, for after beheading the slain with their bamboo knives, the victorious warriors threaded the heads on the rattan slings, which always hung on their backs when they went on the warpath, and as they returned joyously home they swung their ghastly burdens backward and forward with jubilant cries.”<sup>1</sup>

This last incident is a very good example of a survival of what actually took place in the past but has now disappeared. It is interesting to note how much of the former history of a people may be obtained through these little incidents appearing in their myths, legends and dramas. In this particular case we are able to say what were the precise means adopted for dealing with a fallen enemy.

One of the most dramatic of the war dances occurs among the Sea Dyaks of Borneo. This is carried out by one man who is, as a rule, in full battle attire, and armed with a spear, sword and shield. He goes through an elaborate pantomime showing what happens on the actual war-

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Haddon, “Head Hunters,” pp. 187 ff.



path. He starts by pretending to creep through the dense undergrowth in a very cautious manner, peering all about him for the enemy. Suddenly the hiding foe is discovered and a fight ensues, which ends when he lies dead on the ground. The head of this imaginary foe is now taken as it would be after a real fight. Frequently the dancer varies the story and instead of overcoming his enemy, he himself is overcome. This gives him a good opportunity to display his histrionic ability in the death agonies through which he goes before he finally succumbs.<sup>1</sup>

In this dance we see a simple story enacted in a manner similar to that used by a much more primitive man at a time when language was very meagre. A person of that period would probably have told to his people, in almost the same way, the story of a fight. He had in acting, a language which was understood by all, and this in a large measure made up for the lack of a more fully developed spoken tongue. As was shown in the first chapter, it was out of an acted story such as this that the more highly perfected drama grew.

<sup>1</sup> E. H. Gomes, "Seventeen Years Among the Sea Dyaks of Borneo," p. 222.

Among the Haitians an elaborate war drama is performed in which are portrayed the motive for the war, the departure of the warriors, the ambuscades, the surprise of the enemy, the combat, the celebration of the victory, and the return of the war party. The last act consists of mortuary rites of a commemorative nature for the fallen.<sup>1</sup> It is a simple matter to find a play on the modern stage which has exactly the same outline of a plot as this one just described. Many of those dealing with the incidents of the Civil War were much less complicated than this play of the savages. The last incident or the mourning for the dead has a very close analogy on the Greek stage where in such a play as Æschylus' "Agamemnon," the chorus cry out, "Woe! Woe! My King! My King! How shall I mourn thee? What shall I utter from my affectionate soul?" In the "Seven Against Thebes" Antigone and Ismene sing over the body of Eteocles as it is borne back from the fatal combat with his brother Polynices to be buried at Thebes. Antigone says, "Thou smotest and wert smitten." Ism. "Thou slewest and wert slain. With the spear

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Fewkes, "The Aborigines of Porto Rico," Bureau of Ethnology Report, 1903-4, p. 64.

thou hast killed, with the spear thou wert killed." Antig. "Sorrow thou wroughtest!" Ism. "Sorrow thou sufferedst!" Antig. "Let wailing arise!" Ism. "Let the tear well forth!" Antig. "There thou liest low!" Ism. "Thou laidest thy foe low." Antig. "Alas, alas, my brain is maddened with laments." Ism. "My heart within me makes moan." Finally the body of Eteocles is carried off the stage to the grave, but the tomb is not seen.<sup>1</sup> Æschylus' "Persæ" is also a worship of dead heroes.<sup>2</sup> The Greeks likewise had war dances whose main purpose seems to have been "to familiarize the young citizens with the various postures of attack and defence and with the evolutions of an enemy."<sup>3</sup>

The majority of the savage war dances are accompanied by singing. The following is the translation of one of the Polynesian songs.

"Roll onward like the billows,  
Break on them with the foam and roar  
of the ocean as it bursts on the reefs;  
Hang on them as the forked lightning  
plays above the frothing surf;

<sup>1</sup> Ridgeway, "Origin of Tragedy," p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> J. W. Donaldson, "The Theatre of the Greeks," p. 11.

Till their line is broken and they flee  
backward like the receding tide.”<sup>1</sup>

The following song is a translation of one used by the Iroquois in their dances.

“I am brave and intrepid — I do not fear death or any kind of torture — those who fear them are cowards. They are less than women. Life is nothing to those who have courage. May my enemies be confounded with despair and rage!”<sup>2</sup>

A war play among the natives of Sarawak which would have done credit to a more modern society opens with a man seated on the ground picking a thorn out of his foot. He is evidently expecting an attack from an enemy, for his weapons are beside him and he is looking around suspiciously. Finally the enemy is discovered and a conflict takes place. In the course of the fight a sudden plunge on the part of the foe so injures the man that he falls dying. Before finally expiring, he graphically portrays all the death agonies. He has hardly ceased struggling when the enemy grabs the head and cuts it off. While holding up the bloody trophy he suddenly

<sup>1</sup> G. F. S. Elliott, “The Romance of Savage Life,” p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> Morgan, “League of Iroquois.” Vol. I, p. 260.

discovers that the man was not an enemy, but his brother. At this point the dancer gives way to a most horrible performance in which he tries to depict the feelings of remorse. In the end he falls on the ground in a convulsive fit and is attended by a medicine man.<sup>1</sup>

Of the numerous types of dramatic dances among the Nágá tribes of North East India the war dance is most important. It commences with a review of the warriors who later advance and retreat, parrying blows, and throwing spears as though in a real fight. They creep along in battle array, keeping as near the ground as possible so that nothing shows but a line of shields. When they are near enough to the imaginary enemy they spring up and attack. After they have killed the opposing party they grab tufts of grass, which represent the heads, and these they sever with their battle axes. Returning home they carry the clod over their shoulders as they would the heads of real men. At the village they are met by the women who join in a triumphant song and dance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Ling Roth, "Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo," Vol. I, p. 250; R. Wallaschek, "Primitive Music," p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> G. M. Godden, "Nágá and Other Frontier Tribes of Northeast India," 27 J. A. I., p. 5; T. C. Hodson, "The Nágá Tribes of Manipur," p. 67.

These war dances or pantomimes are typical of those existing among nearly all savage peoples the world over. They show in common the means by which the savages hope to get the gods on their side in the battle through the application of sympathetic magic.<sup>1</sup>

War has always been a favorite subject upon which to found the story of a play, and the distance is not very great between these serious rites of the savage and the plays of the Greeks possessing the war elements. But it is not even necessary to rise to such a civilized community in order to see the war drama stripped of its important function, for many of the savage peoples enact such plays merely for the pleasure which they themselves get out of it. So it is with many of the ceremonies which we have so far studied. They lose their religious idea entirely and remain among the people merely as sources of enjoyment. These survivals in the pleasure plays of savage peoples will be dealt with in the next chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Among the Tshi-speaking people when the men are away at a war, the women go through various pantomimic dances at home in order that the men may be successful. Ellis, "Tshi-speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa," pp. 226 ff. The Masai also have war dances. H. H. Johnston, "Uganda Protectorate," Vol. II, p. 833; Morgan, "The League of the Iroquois," Vol. I, p. 261.

*THE PLEASURE PLAYS OF  
SAVAGE PEOPLE*





## CHAPTER VII

### *THE PLEASURE PLAYS OF SAVAGE PEOPLE*

**I**N all of the dramatic performances which have thus far been considered there has been a dominant note of seriousness. The people had ideas to express, petitions and requests to make to the higher powers, and they found that their most effective means of accomplishing this was by allowing the imitative impulse to have full sway. By so doing, they experienced an unconscious pleasure, that is, an enjoyment similar to that which a hungry man feels when he obtains food. In both of these there is need in the body to be satisfied, one mental, the other physical, and by satisfying it they receive a certain amount of pleasure. The civilized man differs from the savage in the purpose of the theatre, in that he has an aim in attending a dramatic performance no more serious than that of enjoyment. Thus we may say that as culture advances the more important functions for which the drama was intended by

its originators drop out, leaving only the shell.<sup>1</sup> We can compare the savage drama with its dominant religious idea to the cocoon of a silk worm with the animal inside. There is life and vitality there, but as maturity is reached, the butterfly cuts its way out, leaving merely the covering. This phase of the drama is also seen in many savage communities, but differs from that of the civilized in that the two remain side by side — the serious and the pleasurable. The close connection between these two becomes very evident at this early stage and we often see a play performed at one time for the purpose of obtaining some favor from the gods, and the next time for the pleasure which it gives to those concerned.

In comparing the savage drama with that of people on a higher plane of culture, we find that they have many of their essential elements in common. For instance, not only in the early drama of the savages, but also in that of early Greece there is no division between the actors and spectators. "All are actors, all are doing the

<sup>1</sup> In discussing the motives of play, Tylor ("Anthropology," p. 305) says, "It is doing for the sake of doing, not for what is done." The drama in the later development of these pleasure plays fulfills this description of play, although in its earlier history it is doing, not for the sake of doing, but for what is actually done or accomplished.

thing done, dancing the dance danced. Thus at initiation ceremonies the whole tribe assembles, the only spectators are the uninitiated, the women and the children. No one at this early stage thinks of building a *theatre*, that is, a spectators' place."<sup>1</sup> The drama is an act of worship to be participated in by all those who are allowed the privilege of communicating with the gods. There is no idea of a spectacular performance carried out for the sake of the pleasurable satisfaction which it gives. Several stages are passed through before this condition is reached. As the ritual becomes more complicated, and as the people come to feel that unless every part is enacted each time in precisely the same way the efficacy is lost,<sup>2</sup> it is impossible for the common man to take part. Thus arises the priesthood, composed of men who through some peculiar gift are able effectually to communicate with the gods and spirits in the

<sup>1</sup> J. Harrison, "Ancient Art and Ritual," p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> Among the Areoi of the Polynesian Islands if there was an error of a single word in the dramatic recitations the fêtes would be suspended. Mœrenhout, "Voyages aux Îles du Grand Ocean," Vol. I, pp. 502 ff. In the Kwakiutl societies there could be no greater misfortune than that an error should be made in the recitation or a false step in a dance. Such misfortune would bring down on the performers the ill-will of the directing spirits. Boas, Report of the United States National Museum, 1895, pp. 433 ff.

prescribed manner.<sup>1</sup> The rest of the tribe become spectators or silent petitioners. We see a parallel case in the Roman Catholic Church where the priests are the active worshippers, the congregation the passive. In Greece the tendency was along this same line. The actors became separate from the audience and the plays began to lose their intensely religious character and to become more secular.

It is a fairly easy matter to make a general statement which will apply to one small community such as Greece—it is far harder to make one which holds true for all savage communities and for all ceremonies in these communities. It will therefore be necessary to modify to some extent the statement made in

<sup>1</sup> Among the Tshi-speaking people "dancing is a special branch in the education of a priest and of a priestess. They must be very proficient in this art and they are taught privately by adepts for many months before they are allowed to perform in public. The dance is always performed to the sound of drums, and it is during it that a priest is possessed by a god, and lets fall oracular utterances." Ellis, "Tshi-speaking People of the Gold Coast of West Africa," p. 121.

Among the Polynesians, if a boy wishes to be admitted to one of the sacred dramatic societies, he must first give evidence of being inspired by the gods. Before initiation he remains on probation for months and even years. His stay in the lowest grades is prolonged until he has mastered the songs, dances and dramatic performances. H. Webster, "Primitive Secret Societies," p. 165; Ellis, "Polynesian Research," Vol. I, p. 190. See H. Spencer, "Principles of Sociology," Vol. III, on the Priest as Actor.

the last paragraph that the priests always take the leading rôles. A priest is one who acts as a mediator between man and the gods, hence, in the strictest sense, all who take part in the religious plays are priests. If we look at various ceremonies which have been described, we shall see that the leading actors are not the so-called priests or medicine men in the accepted sense. In Australia the leading rôle is usually taken by one of the older men of the totem, who is versed in the lore and traditions of his group. In the war ceremonies of all peoples, the warriors, led by the chief fighting man, go through the performance, for it is they who are most vitally interested in the success of the expedition. They are the strong people whose appeals will be more readily answered by the war gods than would the requests of a man who had never been on the battle field. We might almost call them the war priests, for they stand between the gods and the people. A general statement which can be made is, that those men are chosen for the different rôles in the dramatic ceremonies who for that particular rite are thought to be able to obtain from the spirits and gods the things needed by the tribe or group. Thus it comes about that when the ceremonies lose their

religious character and appear as simple pleasure plays, the men who before have been taking the parts continue to do so because of their great ability and long experience. In societies where there are two sets of plays — the secular and the religious — the same characters appear in both.

The church dramas of the Middle Ages were performed within the church by the priests,<sup>1</sup> but as they came to lose their sacred character they were put out of the church. "There was also another important reason for this change. The plays had become so long and the settings so elaborate that they could not be accommodated within the walls of the church, and hence they were sent out to the porch, the graveyard, and finally to the market place."<sup>2</sup> The priests, however, continued to act in them because of their greater proficiency in this art. As time went on "the play-cycles required, in many cases, a larger number of actors than the ecclesiastical bodies, even with the aid of the wandering clerks and

<sup>1</sup> H. Spencer, "Principles of Sociology," Vol. III, p. 230. "Little as one might have expected it, we find that the pagan genesis of the drama was paralleled by the Christian re-genesis of it in Mediæval Europe. It commenced as in India, Greece, and Rome, with representations of sacred subjects by priestly actors. Incidents in sacred history were dramatically repeated in edifices devoted to divine worship."

<sup>2</sup> Chambers, "The Mediæval Stage," Vol. II, p. 79.

the cloister schools, could supply. It was necessary to press the laity into service. It was a further step in the same direction when the laity took over the control and financing of plays. For this, one must look mainly to that most important element in mediæval town life, the guilds. Just as the Feast of Fools passed from the hands of the clergy into those of the *sociétés joyeuses*, so did the religious drama into those of the more serious confraternities.”<sup>1</sup> Small bands of strolling players were formed who wandered from place to place, giving their performances in the market squares of the towns. Hence we see that the three most important periods, for our purpose, in the development of the drama — that is, the Savage, the Greek, and the Middle Ages — had in their early history a strong religious idea which in all but the case of Greece finally disappeared, leaving the drama as an institution of pleasure. This statement might also be extended to cover the drama of Japan, India and Java.

In this connection Ridgeway says: “Thespis detached his chorus and dithyramb from some particular shrine, probably at Icaria, his native place, and taking his company with him on

<sup>1</sup> Chambers, Vol. II, p. 87.

wagons gave his performances on his extemporized stage when and where he could find an audience, not for religious purposes, but for a pastime. Thus not merely by defining more accurately the rôle of the actor, but also by lifting Tragedy from being a mere piece of religious ritual tied to a particular spot into a great form of literature, he was the true founder of the Tragic art.

“This view offers a reasonable explanation of Solon’s anger on first seeing Thespis act. A performance which he would have regarded as fit and proper when enacted in some shrine of the gods or at a hero’s tomb, not unnaturally aroused his indignation when the exhibition was merely for sport, as Thespis himself said (and doubtless also for profit), and not at some hallowed spot, but in any profane place where an audience might conveniently be collected. It may of course be said that the offence of Thespis in Solon’s eyes consisted in the impersonation of heroes or of gods. But it is very likely that long before this time sacred dramas with impersonations of the gods were regularly performed in temple precincts, as, for instance, the Mystery Plays at Eleusis, as part of the regular ritual of the deity.



“In process of time actors who had given successful performances of such Mystery and Miracle plays at some church in honor of some holy personage and for the edification of the faithful, began to wander about as strolling players ready to perform their piece wherever they could secure an audience, be it sacred edifice or inn-yard. In so doing they were transforming such plays from being merely a piece of religious ritual attached to some particular shrine into a true form of dramatic literature.

“Nor is it only in these respects that the mediæval Christian drama may be compared with that of early Greece. Not only was the process of development similar, and not only did each arouse the same prejudices on the part of the more religious and staid part of the community, but each sprang from the same deep-rooted principle — the honoring and propitiation of the sacred dead, the hero and the saint — and as a corollary, even of the gods themselves. As the men of Sicyon thought that they pleased Adrastus by rehearsing and representing his sorrows, so the Christian Church honored its Divine Founder by continually keeping His passion in remembrance, as He himself had ordained at the Last Supper.

"The Roman Church still further carries out this same principle of honouring Christ by exhibiting the manger-cradle and holy child at Christmas and His sepulchre at Easter. To this day when every ten years the peasants of Ober-Ammergau perform their Passion Play, they believe that by this solemn representation of the sufferings of Christ they are doing what is pleasing in His sight.

"But if the leader of that company of peasant actors were to take it to some town or city and there perform the sacred drama in a theatre for pastime and for lucre, the feeling of their fellow villagers, and, I doubt not, of a far wider community, would not unnaturally be much the same as those roused in Solon's breast by the performance of Thespis."<sup>1</sup>

As has been said here several times before, the savage peoples who have the greatest number of dramatic ceremonies of a religious character are the Australians and the American Indians. The same statement holds true for the number of pleasure plays.

Of all the peoples on the North American continent the Eskimos take part in the fewest dramatic celebrations, probably because of their

<sup>1</sup> Ridgeway, "The Origin of Tragedy," p. 61.

hard struggle for existence. What plays they have of a pantomimic nature show evidence of an Indian influence.<sup>1</sup> Among these people the dramatic feeling has its outlet in story telling, in which the events are graphically portrayed. It is here that we see the drama in its elementary form, that is, before it has taken on a deeper religious purpose. As was shown in Chapter I, it was out of such crude attempts to express ideas for which there was an inadequate spoken language that the drama developed. Hence it is interesting to find among the Eskimos this practice still carried out, although their spoken language does not need the addition of gestures to have their meaning clear.

After a hunt the hunters tell of their experiences to an interested group of listeners. The slightest details are gone into with the greatest care and precision. When telling of a seal hunt the right arm is raised as though holding the weapon, while the left, which is supposed to be the seal, is held straight in front. One narrator said, "When the time came for using the harpoon, I looked to it, I took it, I seized it, I gripped it, I had it fast in my hand, I balanced it, and so forth. This alone may go on for

<sup>1</sup> J. Mooney, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin, Part I, p. 50.

several minutes, until at the last the hand sinks to represent the throw, and after that they do not forget to make note of the last twitches given by the seal."<sup>1</sup>

In one of the villages on the lower Yukon two women tell the history of the past and display the arts of the present. The first, entirely by her gestures, tells the story of the life of her father before the arrival of the whites. She shows the battles in which he engaged and the wars which took place among the different villages. "Motions of stealthy approach and retreat, then a struggle with the enemy and the flight, ending by a sudden turn and killing of the pursuer by a spear thrust." The other woman then enters and shows by her motions the various occupations in which the women take part. During the whole performance they keep excellent time to the music.<sup>2</sup>

Among all savage peoples the dance holds an important place in their enjoyments. It may be divided into two kinds, the gymnastic and the mimetic,<sup>3</sup> and to the latter, in early times,

<sup>1</sup> Nansen, "Eskimo Life," pp. 71 ff.

<sup>2</sup> E. W. Nelson, "Eskimo about Behring Strait," Bureau of Ethnology, 1896-7, Vol. I, p. 356.

<sup>3</sup> E. Grosse, "The Beginnings of Art," p. 207; K. Groos, "The Play of Man," p. 92; H. Ellis, "The Philosophy of Dancing," *Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1914, pp. 197 ff.

the drama was indissolubly joined, in fact, frequently they were almost synonymous. However, in many cases the dance was probably of more primitive origin than the drama, but at that very early period it had no very definite form and consisted merely of jumping and hopping about. We see evidences of this dance even among the animals, which proves that dancing is older than man himself. Many of the animals dance their love or rather dance before those whom they desire. Here again a parallel case may be found among savage peoples, for they hold love dances at which the young men display their beauty of form to the admiring females or the female hopes by her skill to win the desired mate. In fact, so closely connected is the dance with love that among the Omahas the same word means to dance and to love. But only among human beings do we see the dramatic element entering in, for with them many of the love dances are of a grossly indecent pantomimic nature, but with the animals they consist merely of hopping about and displaying themselves to each other. It is more common among insects and birds than with the larger animals. "The male dances, sometimes in rivalry with other males, in order to charm the

female, then after a short or long interval, the female is roused to share his ardor and join in the dance.”<sup>1</sup>

Although the dance is of so primitive an origin, yet “it is of importance, for it stands as the source of all the arts that express themselves first in the human person.”<sup>2</sup> In all probability dancing and the drama joined early in the history of the race and this union came when the first pantomime was introduced into the crude unmeaning jumping about the campfire. It then came about that the stories of the hunts were partially danced, those taking part going through the pantomime of killing the animals. Their legends and myths of the past had many scenes in which the story was told by the movements of the dancing figures.

One of the simplest and most primitive pleasure dances is found in Australia. It is a canoe dance and might almost appear in one of our modern comic operas. “Both men and women take part in this dance, painting their bodies with white and red ochre, each furnished with a stick which represents a paddle. They begin to dance

<sup>1</sup> Havelock Ellis, “The Philosophy of Dancing,” *Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1914, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

by stationing themselves in two lines, but with the stick across their backs and held by the arms, while they move their feet alternately to the time of the song with which the dance is accompanied. At a given signal they all bring the sticks to the front, and hold them as they do paddles, swaying themselves in regular time as if they were paddling in one of their light canoes.”<sup>1</sup>

In Africa we find that there are few pleasure performances which can truly be called dramatic and only seldom out of their many dances can one be found in which even a simple incident is carried through to a conclusion. There are hardly any people who enjoy the dance as do the Africans, and most of their performances imitate the movements of animals,<sup>2</sup> but they do little besides the mere jumping or hopping around, that is, performing the gymnastic dance. All events, such as births, marriages, and deaths, are occasions for dances and “no noonday sun is too hot and no rain too heavy to cause zeal to flag or damp the ardour of the people.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Smyth, “Aborigines of Victoria,” Vol. I, pp. 174 ff.; J. G. Wood, “Natural History of Man,” Vol. II, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Weeks, “Among the Congo Canibals,” p. 157; H. H. Johnston, “Uganda,” Vol. II, p. 779; G. W. Stow, “The Native Races of South Africa,” pp. 116 ff.

<sup>3</sup> P. T. Talbot, “In the Shadow of the Bush,” pp. 293 ff.

One dance which is an exception to the above statement occurs among the Damaras, where a victorious war party, represented by the fighting men of the village, are welcomed on their return by a chorus of women. During the dance the men occasionally drive back any of the supposed enemies who have the audacity to approach them.<sup>1</sup> The Bushmen have a baboon dance in which the performers imitate the actions and grimaces of baboons, jumping, gambolling and running around on all fours like a troop of excited monkeys.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Wood, "Natural History of Man," Vol. I, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> G. W. Stow, "The Native Races of South Africa," pp. 116 ff. Wallaschek, "Primitive Music," p. 216; Reade, "Savage Africa," p. 195.

"It is quite possible that some of these dances may have had, at one time, a mythical signification attached to them, which would only be understood by the initiated. This idea is suggested by a myth which Mr. Joseph M. Orpen obtained from a Maluti Bushman named 'Qing (King Bleek) who said *Cagn* (the 'Kaang of Arbousset and Callaway and *kaggen* of Bleek) sent Cogaz to cut sticks to make bows. When Cogaz came to the bush the baboons (cogn) caught him. They called all the other baboons to hear him and they asked him who sent him there. He said his father sent him to cut sticks to make bows. So they said, 'Your father thinks himself more clever than we are, and he wants those bows to kill us, so we'll kill you,' and they killed Cogaz, and tied him up in the top of a tree, and they danced round the tree, singing (an intranscribable baboon song) with a chorus saying 'Cagn thinks he is clever.' Cagn was asleep when Cogaz was killed, but when he awoke he told Coti to give him his charms, and he put some on his nose, and said, the baboons have hung Cogaz. So he went to where the baboons were and when they saw him coming close by, they changed their song



One dance of the Eskimos, which occurs among the Columbians in a more developed form, is participated in by the young men, who, stripped to the waist, go through burlesque imitations of beasts and birds. Their movements are in time to the beating of a tambourine and to the singing of the people. Other pantomimic dances portray love, hate, jealousy and friendship.<sup>1</sup> Little comment is needed here to show that these dramatic dances are of so simple a character that they belong to the lowest stages of the drama. For this reason they are of the

so as to omit the words about Cagn, but a little baboon girl said, 'Don't sing that way, sing the way you were singing before.' And Cagn said, 'Sing as the little girl wishes,' and they sang and danced as before. And Cagn said, 'That is the song I heard, that is what I wanted, go on dancing until I return'; and he went and fetched a bag full of pegs, and went behind each of them as they were dancing and making a great dust, and he drove a peg into each one's back, and gave it a crack, and sent them off to the mountains to live on roots, beetles, and scorpions, as a punishment. *Before that baboons were men*, but since that they have tails, and their tails hang crooked. Then Cagn took Cogaz down, and gave him Canna, and made him alive again.' From the above it is quite possible that this dance may have been instituted in honor of some festival dedicated to 'Kaang or his son. 'Qing informed Mr. J. Orpen that there were certain dances which only certain men were allowed to dance: *men who had been initiated, and understood the meaning of them*. Some of these animal dances may belong to this class."

<sup>1</sup> H. H. Bancroft, "Native Races of the Pacific States," Vol. I, p. 67; E. Grosse, "Beginnings of Art," pp. 207 ff.; W. I. Thomas, "Source Book for Social Origins," p. 584; E. W. Nelson, Eskimo about Behring Strait." Bur. of Ethn. 1896-7, Vol. I, p. 356.

utmost importance to our study, for it is probable that if we knew the early history of all savage peoples we should find these little bits of dramatic art which appear among the Eskimos of to-day. It would be difficult to say why these people of the north have not advanced to a higher stage in this art, but the fact that they are living on the edge of subsistence, that the population is small, and that the religious totem idea plays a very small part in their lives, may in some measure account for it. It has probably been noticed that no people have a well-developed drama of pleasure who have not had the dramatic religious ceremonies. This circumstance is not alone confined to the savages but also appeared among the Greeks and in the Middle Ages. Hence when we find a people in whose lives religion does not now play or has not in the past played a dominant part, we are pretty safe in concluding that they have few pleasure plays.

Two types of dramatic dance which we have noticed as being very common among many peoples of the world are: first, that of mimicking the actions of animals either in the hunt or merely alone in their native habitat, and, second, that of showing the different scenes from the

daily life of the people, such as fishing, hunting, and agriculture. These same ideas are carried out in the little pleasure plays of the American Indians. The Skanlet tribes of British Columbia have a fish-hawk dance in which the movements of the bird are carefully portrayed.<sup>1</sup> The Hill tribes of North Aracan have a hunting dance,<sup>2</sup> and the Indians of California enact scenes of hunting and warfare in which the old women assisted the men to carry off the game or to dispatch the wounded enemies. Similar dances take place among the Pueblo Indians, and among the Isthmus tribes.<sup>3</sup>

After the actual dance, the next most developed form of the drama appears in the crude animal imitations and in the portrayal of the relation of man to his animal environment.

We have seen how important a part ceremonies play in the life of the Australians, especially those dealing with the food supply; thus it is only natural that when these people are seeking pleasure, they should turn to these to find it. The inhabitants of this country are of a cheerful disposition and very fond of a joke, hence

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Tout, "Streelis and Skanlets Tribes of British Columbia," 34 J. A. I., p. 329.

<sup>2</sup> St. John, "Hill Tribes of North Aracan," 2 J. A. I., p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 393, 411, 551, 774.

many of the plays consist of a burlesque of the more serious hunting rites. In one witnessed by Mr. Howitt, two old men were seen standing back of the fire at the edge of the cleared space. In the darkness of the forest on the other side were dimly discernible the rest of the men crouching together. They were the "Rock Wallabies." An old man came out and drove the "animals" past the other man, who was supposed to knock each one over with his stick as it went by. This represented a real Rock Wallaby hunt, where the animals are driven past the hunters who are in ambush. This pantomime was intended to be comic, for the man always missed the animals and for this reason was much abused by the others.<sup>1</sup> In another dance on the same island the men hump around, mimicking the motions of a sacred troop of the marsupial brutes and in so doing cause the audience much merriment.<sup>2</sup>

In the Philippine Islands the following little comedy was witnessed by M. de la Gironière. "A wanderer appears who is overcome with fatigue and half-starved. All at once he dis-

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Howitt, "Australian Ceremonies," 13 J. A. I., p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> Smyth, "Aborigines of Victoria," Vol. I, p. 173; George Toplin, "The Narrinyeri," 1874; Wood, "Natural History of Man," Vol. II, pp. 62 ff.; Dawson, "Australian Aborigines," p. 84.

covers a bee-hive full of honey. Delighted with this lucky discovery, he looks forward to satisfying his appetite on the delicate fare. He sets fire to some twigs and sneaks up on tiptoe to the hive. First he burns himself, then his throat is filled with smoke, and at last he is attacked by the bees who are heard humming all round, while the man fights about in a ludicrous manner expressive of the pain caused by their sting.”<sup>1</sup>

In the dances or dramatic performances of the Papuans of New Guinea there are enacted scenes from everyday life in which the mimetic hunting of the animals, the actions of the animals among themselves in the woods or on the plains, and the domestic scenes around the camp are carefully portrayed.<sup>2</sup> These very simple pantomimic dances in which there is no deeper purpose than enjoyment were probably indulged in at a very early stage in the development of the race and many of them have retained their original simple character. They form an im-

<sup>1</sup> De la Gironière, “Adventures d’un Gentilhomme breton aux îles philippines,” quoted by K. Mantzius, “A History of Theatrical Art,” Vol. I, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Krieger, “Neu-Guinea,” pp. 210 ff.; Wallaschek, “Primitive Music,” p. 218. The same kind of mimetic dances are held on the Murray Islands. Haddon, “Head Hunters,” p. 114.

portant addition to a study of this sort, for in them we see one of the early expressions of the imitative desire of man, and they form a stepping stone to an understanding of the higher dramatic art which appears among the savage peoples.

Of the performances in North America in which the animals are represented, that of the Seal Dance is the commonest. The young men strip, and though it may be a cold night, they go out of the house and throw themselves into the water. Soon they reappear, dragging their bodies over the sands as do the seals. When they enter the house they flop around the fires for a while and then they get up and dance.<sup>1</sup> In one performance they illuminate a wax moon out on the water and then pretend to be conversing with the man who is supposed to dwell there.

In South America, among the less civilized tribes, we find the enjoyment of imitation as strongly developed as in any other quarter of the globe. The mosquito tribes of Honduras,<sup>2</sup> and the Indians of Guiana<sup>3</sup> all have animal dances

<sup>1</sup> Brown, "The Races of Mankind," Vol. I, pp. 35 ff.; Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 736.

<sup>3</sup> Wallaschek, "Primitive Music," p. 220.

in which very clever mimicry is carried out, some of the performers dressing in the skins of the animals better to personate them.

Among the Fuegians the ancient initiation lodge “‘était aussi le théâtre de scènes mystérieuses, bizarres, d’origine très ancienne, dont les rôles, autrefois tenus par les femmes, avaient été ensuite exclusivement dévolus aux hommes. Ceux-ci, diversement grimés, babrouillés de sang tiré de leurs propres veines, le visage caché par des bonnets en écorce, sortaient de la *kina* en file indienne, sautant ou chantant, poussant des cris sauvages, et cherchant à se rendre aussi effrayants que possible. Les femmes et les enfants n’étaient pas admis dans l’intérieur de la *kina*, mais se plaçaient au dehors en spectateurs, manifestaient leur contentement par des cris de frayeur, alternant avec des éclats de gaieté, et chantaient en même temps que les hommes, mais sans jamais se mêler à eux. Trois des acteurs jouaient un rôle particulier; l’un était supposé venir du fond de la mer, le second de l’intérieur de la terre et le troisième de l’épaisseur des forêts. Il n’y avait dans tout cela, aucune idée propitiatoire envers un être supérieur, mais simplement l’intention de s’amuser par le spectacle lui-même.’ The Cai-

shana, a Brazilian tribe on the Tunantins river, retain their masked dances in honor of the Juru-pari demon. Among the Tucunas the masked dances are now semi-festivals, while among the more civilized Egas of Northwestern Brazil the masked dances are nothing but theatrical performances.”<sup>1</sup>

Many of the pleasure plays of the Australians correspond closely to the comic opera of civilized peoples, for they have not only the main dancers and singers, but also the chorus, who in many cases mimic various animals, such as the emu and the kangaroo.

Captain Cook in his voyage through the South Seas tells as follows of a dramatic performance which he and his men witnessed on the Mattair Bay Island. “As soon as dinner was over, which admits of no ceremony, we were conducted to the theatre, where a company of players were in readiness to perform a dramatical entertainment. The drama was regularly divided into three acts: the first consisted of dancing and dumb show; the second of comedy; which to those who understood the language was very

<sup>1</sup> Webster, “Primitive Secret Societies,” pp. 176-7, quoting from “Mission Scientifique du Cap Horn,” (Paris, 1891), Vol. VII, p. 377, and H. W. Bates, “The Naturalist on the River Amazon,” Vol. II, p. 376.



laughable, as Omai and the native appeared highly diverted the whole time; the last was a musical piece, in which the young princesses were the sole performers.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Hutton Webster, many of the secret societies which heretofore had a very definite religious purpose to perform and into which the boys were initiated with great ceremony have become merely dramatic societies and their secret houses, into which none but the initiated could be admitted, have been turned into the theatre for the town.<sup>2</sup> In the Congo region of Africa, when a boy wishes to enter one of these quasi-dramatic societies, he is given a sleeping potion. He then swoons in some public assemblage and is at once surrounded by the fetish man and his assistants, who carry him away into an enclosure. The people are told that he is dead and that he has gone to the spirit world, but that through the power of the fetish man he will return.<sup>3</sup> A close analogy exists between this rite and the one which takes place among some of the American Indian tribes where it is supposed that at the time of puberty the totem

<sup>1</sup> Cook, “Voyages,” pp. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Webster, “Primitive Secret Societies,” pp. 160 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Webster, “Primitive Secret Societies,” pp. 173 ff.; Glave, “Six Years of Adventure in Congo Land,” p. 80.

carries the boy's soul away and gives him a new one.<sup>1</sup> Other societies with their little plays wander from place to place giving their performances as did the strolling players of the Middle Ages.

A very good example of the loss of the religious idea in the pleasure plays occurs in New Pomerania. There the Duk-Duk Society, which in an earlier chapter we saw was seriously used during the initiation of the boys and at other important seasons, loses this character entirely and appears merely as a dramatic organization. The members give dramatic representations often lasting for months in which two masked figures, the Duk-Duk and his wife, Tuburan, are the leading actors. The little troupe travel from village to village, giving their plays before native audiences.

A tragic performance which has as its basis the ceremonial killing of a boy appears among the Aht Indians in Northwestern America, although the serious purpose for which it was originally performed has entirely vanished. A youth comes on the stage with his hands tied behind his back by means of long cords, the ends of which are held by men who drag him

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV, on Initiation Ceremonies.

about. Suddenly the chief, armed with a long knife, appears. This he plunges into the youth's back several times until the victim, covered with blood, staggers and falls lifeless. The rest of the actors carry the body outside. When away from view of the spectators the "corpse" washes itself and puts on its blanket. The knife that was used has a blade which sinks into the handle when it strikes any object, and the "blood" is a mixture of red gum, resin, oil and water, which was carried in the mouth of the victim. Throughout the whole performance the spectators sing and beat time on drums.<sup>1</sup>

One play which takes place among the Indians of the Aleutian Islands is deserving of more than a passing reference, because of its world-wide popularity. A hunter goes forth in the quest of game and seeing a beautiful bird shoots it. The bird, however, suddenly revives and turns into a lovely woman with whom he at once falls in love.<sup>2</sup> There are few countries in the world in which this myth or fairy story does not appear in some form, but of all savage peoples the Aleuts are the only ones who have

<sup>1</sup> Brown, "The Races of Mankind," Vol. I., p. 38; Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 200; Wood, "Natural History of Man," Vol. II, pp. 737 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Wallaschek, "Primitive Music," p. 226; H. H. Bancroft, "Native Races of the Pacific States," Vol. I, p. 93.

put it into dramatic form. Among the Eskimos the story runs that a wise and beautiful maiden did something to incur the enmity of a powerful wicked fairy and was immediately changed into an owl.<sup>1</sup> In Russia a youth is about to shoot a swan when the bird prays him to desist. Suddenly it rises from the sea and turns into a maiden whom the youth weds.<sup>2</sup> A very similar tale is told by the Arawaks of Guiana and by the Algonquins.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to go into the study of bird-lore and to show how closely wrapped up with the totem the whole idea has become.<sup>4</sup> For our purpose here it is merely to be noticed in the example given that the subject-matter of the play, which at one time was probably religious, is similar to that scene in the children's plays of to-day. The dramatization of Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Bean Stalk, and Cinderella is in exactly the same class as that of the myth of the Hunter and the Bird, which is enjoyed so much by the Indians of the Aleutian Islands.

<sup>1</sup> M. C. Walker, "Bird Legend and Life," p. 5. Ophelia says (Hamlet, Act IV, scene V), "They say the owl was a baker's daughter."

<sup>2</sup> E. S. Hartland, "The Science of Fairy Tales," p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 261, 268.

<sup>4</sup> For a full discussion of bird-lore, see Charles de Kay, "Bird Gods."

The Buffalo dance of the Iroquois is based on an old legend. It started during a warlike expedition of the Iroquois against the Cherokees. When the attacking party had reached the Kentucky "salt lick," they heard the buffaloes "singing their favorite songs, bellowing and grumbling." From all this noise the Iroquois made up their music and from the actions of the buffalo they constructed their dance.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the savage peoples have more or less elaborate stages and settings for their performances. Among many tribes in North America, for instance, drama for pleasure has reached such a high plane that they possess many of the stage properties and accessories used by those with a very much higher degree of culture. At one end of a big hall a curtain is hung in order to conceal the preparations which are being made. The actors make their entrances and exits through concealed openings in the painted back wall. On the stage itself, which in the majority of cases is not raised, are placed effigies and other paraphernalia which will add to the reality of the scenes portrayed. The subject-matter of the plays is varied and includes historical or mythical events, parts of the cultural

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, "League of Iroquois," Vol. I, p. 276.

history, and many of the everyday occurrences, such as hunting and fishing trips, and episodes from the various wars. The actors impersonate not only the gods and heroes, but also the animals of the hunt. Nearly all of the dramatic presentations are accompanied by singing and dancing.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most complicated and dramatic performances of the North American Indians is held among the Hopi Indians during the March moon, and deals with the Great Serpent, called Palūlakoñti. This performance, which is one of many similar performances, at one time had a religious motive, but now this has been lost in the more predominant dramatic element. This drama of the Great Serpent takes place simultaneously in six or seven kivas, the actors passing from one to the other. In each kiva by the fireplace in the centre of the room sit two old men who continually feed the fire with small pieces of wood. These men also have big blankets which they hold over the fire at the entrance of the actors so that the stage may be set without being seen by the audience. The play consists of six acts which seem to be largely dissociated from each other.

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Ethnology Bulletin, 30, Part I, p. 400; H. H. Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 200; Jewitt, "Narratives," p. 389.

At the beginning of the first act, as the play was observed, a voice was heard outside of the hatchway asking for admittance. Having been told to enter by the old men, the actors slowly descend the ladder. At this moment the old men stood up and covered the light of the fire with their blankets. The actors, who were masked, had with them long poles on which was a cloth screen, or drop curtain, and under their blankets various other objects which were to be used. When the stage was set, the blankets were dropped and the following scene was presented to the audience.

On the floor was set up a miniature field of corn made of small clay pedestals with sprouts of corn projecting from them. Behind this hung the decorated cloth screen which reached from one side of the room to the other and nearly to the top rafters. On this were painted various designs and symbols such as human beings, birds, rain clouds, lightning, and falling rain. About two feet from the bottom was a row of six circular disks, the borders of which were made with plaited corn husks, while in the middle of each was a picture of the sun. The screen was upheld on each side by men wearing masks. On each side of the screen stood men

wearing grotesque masks and short ceremonial kilts. One of these men was dressed as a woman who carried in her hand a basket of meal and an ear of corn. The play began with a song and dance in which all but the last mentioned man took part. Suddenly a hoarse roar, made by one of the concealed actors blowing through a gourd, resounded from behind the screen, and immediately the circular disks opened outward. These were seen to be flaps which covered orifices out of which simultaneously protruded six artificial heads of serpents realistically painted. Each had enormous protruding goggle eyes and on the head, a curved horn, back of which was a row of feathers. These effigies were thrust gradually into view until they revealed four or five feet of painted body. As they reached their fullest extent the song became louder and louder. The effigies moved back and forth, raising and lowering their heads in time to the music. They seemed to be biting ferociously at each other and viciously darting at the men standing near the screen. This continued for a while until suddenly the heads of the serpents bent down to the floor, across the imitation corn field, knocking over the clay pedestals and the corn leaves which they



supported. Shortly after this the song became less in volume, the effigies slowly withdrew through the openings, the flaps descended, the roar behind the screen ceased, the fire was covered up by the old men, and the first act was over.

In the second act a Buffalo Dance took place. Several men wearing helmets supposed to represent the heads of the buffalo and having on their backs shaggy skins in order to better complete the realistic picture, carried in their hands zigzag pieces of wood which were supposed to be symbolic of lightning. These imitation buffaloes were accompanied by a masked man and boy representing eagles. These danced before the buffalo, uttering calls in imitation of birds.

In the third act a somewhat elaborate dance was carried out by a masked woman who represented the Spider Woman whom we have noticed earlier in the myth of the Snake-Antelope fraternities.

The fourth act opened by a man wearing a very shabby mask and bearing a heavy bundle on his back slowly coming down the ladder. He pretended to slip on each rung, but caught himself before falling, and eventually reached the bottom without accident. He opened his bundle and took out a *metate* and a meal grind-

ing stone which he arranged on the floor before the fireplace. A second man with a like bundle did the same, the two men seating themselves by the fire. Next two girls entered and knelt by the stones, and facing the fire assumed the positions of girls when grinding corn. Then entered the chorus, made up of a procession of masked men who filed around the room and halted in line behind the kneeling girls. As soon as these latter were in position, they began to dance a solemn dance and to sing an accompanying song. The girls kept time to the song by rubbing the mealing stones back and forth over the *metates* and the kneeling men clapped their hands in time to the music. This continued for a while, then the girls arose and danced in the middle of the room, posturing their bodies and extending their hands in which they carried the ears of corn.

The fifth act was in many ways similar to the first, with the exception of the fact that the men tried to wrestle with the serpents and were in each case overcome.

In the last act the serpent effigies again appeared, only this time out of two large jugs. They waved their heads around, knocked over the corn field, struggled with each other, and

finally disappeared back into the jugs. The movements of these snakes were carried on by invisible wires which were strung to the top of the kiva and operated by hidden performers.

During some years there are as many as nine acts performed instead of six. Sometimes the screen performance is accompanied by an exhibition by a masked man or men who pretend to struggle with the snake effigy which they carry in their arms. This performance consists mainly in twisting these effigies about the body and neck of the performer. The serpent effigies in this incident were manipulated by one arm of the actor which was concealed in the body of the serpent, but a false arm is tied to the shoulder in place of the hidden arm to deceive the spectators.

Frequently in the fourth act, in place of the two girls grinding corn, they have marionettes who represent the corn maidens. These two figures are seated by the fire and are skilfully manipulated by wires going to a concealed man. All the motions of the living girls are gone through by these little figures, even to the rubbing of the meal on the face, which is done frequently by the grinders.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See drama of Java, Wilken, "Volkenkunde."

The substitution of marionettes for masked girls suggests an explanation of the use of idols among the Hopi. A supernatural being of the Hopi Olympus may be represented in ceremony or drama by a man wearing a mask, or by a graven image or picture, a symbol of the same. Sometimes one, sometimes the other method of personating the god is employed, and often both. In the latter method the image may be used on the altar, while the masked man appears in the public exhibition in the pueblo plaza. Neither idol nor masked personators are worshipped, but both are regarded as symbolic representations, in which possibly the gods may temporarily reside.

So in the use of marionettes to represent the Corn Maidens in the theatrical exhibition or personation by masked girls in the same rôle. They are symbolic representations of the mythic maidens whose beneficent gifts of corn and other seeds, in ancient times, is a constant theme in Hopi legends.

We are justified in calling the preceding performance a theatrical exhibition rather than a religious ceremony for the following reasons. Many of the sacred objects which are always present in a religious ceremony of the Hopis,

such as the altar, the feather sticks, and the medicine and medicine bowl are here absent. The performers do not belong to any special religious fraternity, and all the men, women and children are permitted to witness the performance — a thing unheard of in their religious ceremonies. The paraphernalia used are not ancient as is the case with most of the things used in a religious ceremony.

The explanation of these theatrical performances must be sought in the symbolization of legendary events, part historical, part mythical. Since these performances deal with mythological subjects the actors are personations of mythic or supernatural beings.

The effigies represent the Great Serpent, a supernatural personage of importance in all their legends. This being is associated with the Hopi version of the flood, for it is said that in ancient times, while the ancestors of certain clans lived in the far south, at a place called Palatkwabi, this monster on one occasion rose through the middle of the pueblo plaza to the zenith, drawing after him a great flood, which submerged the land and obliged the Hopi to migrate, and to seek refuge in the north, their present home. At this time, which was long

ago in their annals, the Serpent rose, and, calling out from the clouds, demanded the sacrifice of a boy and girl. To this demand the Hopi acceded with children of their chiefs, whom the monster took, and sank back into the earth, leaving a black rock to mark the place of sacrifice.

When the two serpent effigies automatically rise from the two vases, throwing back the semicircular flaps with rain-cloud symbols, it represents the event recorded in legends — the Hopi version of the flood. The snake effigies knocking over the miniature field of corn symbolize floods; possibly wind, which the Great Serpent brings. The effigies of the monsters emerge through orifices closed by disks, upon which sun symbols are depicted, to show how floods which destroy the fields come from the sky, the realm of the sun. The masked men, called "mudheads," are ancients which have come to have superhuman powers in causing corn to grow and mature. They struggle with the monsters who would destroy the farms of man. The acts in which they appear represent in a symbolic way the contest of early man with supernatural powers which set at naught the labors of the agriculturist. But nowhere is

the dramatic element more prominent than in the representation of the conversion of corn into meal, when the personators of the Corn Maids, or effigies of the same, grind the meal in the kivas or public plazas. We have this exhibition in at least two forms, one by figurines, another by masked girls. Although the masks or maskettes which these girls wear vary slightly in symbols, there is little doubt that they represent the Corn Maids, who are likewise represented by the two figurines.

All the acts, given for the instruction or amusement of spectators, are symbolic dramatic representations of events in the cultural history or life of the Hopi, especially those recounted in the legends of their clans. They are rude mystery plays of a religious nature — developments from archaic ceremonies which have come to have a secular as well as religious use. While affording entertainment, which the Hopi greatly enjoy, they instruct the spectators in the mysteries of religion, as the Hopi regard this sentiment.<sup>1</sup>

On the island of Java, where a high civiliza-

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Fewkes, "A Theatrical Performance at Walpi." *Proceedings of the Washington Academy of Sciences*, Dec. 28, 1900, Vol. II, pp. 605 ff.; A. M. Stephen, "The Palūlakoñti — a Tuscayan Ceremony," *Journal of American Folk-lore*, 1893, pp. 269 ff.

tion has existed for thousands of years, the drama takes on many unique characteristics. The basis of this drama, or *Wajang*,<sup>1</sup> seems to be the puppet shows, which may be divided under two heads, those in which the actual puppets are used, and those in which human beings take the parts of puppets. When a performance of the first type occurs, a screen, upon which the shadows appear, is stretched across one end of a room. In front of this the spectators sit, but it often happens that the male members of the audience may sit behind the screen with the manipulator, or *Dalang*, if they desire, so that they may see not only the shadows, but also the puppets themselves.

The Javanese distinguish three kinds of *Wajang*. In the first, which is the oldest and most original, the stories are taken from Hindu traditions, such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. They deal with the oldest mythological history at a time when the gods had close intercourse with men. The gods, demi-gods and other beings are represented in this *Wajang* by means of puppets of a hideous shape. They are cut out of buffalo leather and are about two feet high with movable joints and are cov-

<sup>1</sup> The word "*Wajang*" means shadow, or apparition.



ered with paint of various colors. The arms are extremely long and thin, while the countenances are sharp as the beak of a bird and are provided with monstrous noses and hideous canine teeth. An outfit of these puppets represents a large capital. One man is known to have a set which is worth about 3000 gulden, although the average cost of two hundred puppets ranges between 180 and 700 gulden.<sup>1</sup>

In the second type of Wajang the story is taken from some of the Javanese hero myths. The puppets in this performance are less expensive than those made in the first sort of Wajang. They are usually made out of thin flat wood, the hands alone being made of buffalo hide.

In the third type the puppets are not flat but round and no screen is used for the performance. This means, of course, that the spectators see the puppets and not their shadows and for this reason they can be exhibited in the daytime. The story of these plays deals with more modern history than in the case of either of the other two.

In all three types the puppets are manipulated by one man, usually the owner, who also recites the lines of the play. He is assisted by an orchestra

<sup>1</sup> Gulden = \$40.

and also by a singer who attempts, during the intermissions, to amuse the audience by her songs.

In many localities there are performances given, in which the puppets are replaced by human beings, but their actions are so stiff and awkward that they might well be controlled by strings and wires. They do not speak and merely follow the action of the lines as they are recited by the Dalang. This man is as important a functionary in the drama of the Javanese as is the Choregus in the drama of the Greeks. He is treated in the community with great reverence and respect, and when he supplies his own puppets he does not have to serve in the army or in any other public capacity and he is exempt from the payment of land taxes with the understanding that his village companions are to pay his share. In the country districts it frequently happens that these men can neither read nor write and hence the parts which they recite are taught to them by Master Dalangs. In the cities, however, these men are very learned and not only can read and write, but also possess great knowledge of the native literature. It is a very difficult thing to become an accomplished Dalang, for one must be eloquent, must have a large vocabulary at his

disposal, and must know the Javanese etiquette in the smallest details. He must have a good memory and a quick wit to fill in the gaps in case he forgets his lines. The Dalang finds in the Wajang performance his means of subsistence and hence he must become very expert if he wishes to succeed. A good man will often earn as much as 25 gulden in an evening, but out of this he must pay all expenses.

The purpose of these Wajang seems to be threefold: pleasure, teaching, and religion. A marriage is never properly consummated and the blessings of the gods cannot rest upon the pair, if the Wajang is omitted. In sickness or for any undertaking whatever, it is proper to make a promise of a Wajang performance, if there should be a fortunate outcome.<sup>1</sup> A Javanese will say that one aim of these plays is to give the people a better insight into the history of the country.<sup>2</sup> The moral teaching in this drama is a negligible quantity, for acts of the greatest indecency are presented. The heroes, gifted with invulnerability, armed with irresistible weapons, backed up by celestial powers, can present very little inspiration, because bravery

<sup>1</sup> See the Sun Dance of the Plains Indians.

<sup>2</sup> See the Australian Initiation Ceremonies.

is for the people almost unknown. Perhaps at one time the drama in Java performed the important rites which we find laid at its door in other parts of the world, but that time is past and it exists at the present time largely for the pleasure which it affords to the people.<sup>1</sup>

The height reached by the drama among the so-called savage peoples is in the plays of the Ancient Peruvians and the Aztecs. The "civilization" of these people is so well known that it would be vain repetition to discuss it here. However, the dramatic phase deserves a very prominent place in this study of primitive forms of the drama. The Peruvians were very clever in composing tragedies and comedies which were played before their kings and nobility on festival occasions. The tragedies dealt with military deeds, triumphs, and victories or portrayed the splendor of former kings and heroes. The comedies had for their subject-matter agriculture or other household subjects. These people also understood blank verse. The actors who took part in these plays were not the common people, but noblemen and their sons.<sup>2</sup> In some other

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Wilken, "Volkenkunde," Ch. V, pp. 101 ff.

<sup>2</sup> "The Royal Commentaries of Peru," written originally in Spanish by the Inca, Garcilasso de la Vega, 1688, p. 49; W. I. Thomas, "Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago," First Series, 4: pp. 241 ff. See the "Nō" Plays of Japan.

high civilizations, such as that of Rome, the acting profession was looked down upon and those who took part were in a class by themselves.<sup>1</sup> But looking at a lower civilization we see that often the chief, the priest, and the actor were one and the same person; in fact, the most prominent men in the tribe were those who could act the best and these formed a society of their own, not below, as in the case of some more advanced civilization, but very far above the common throng.

Among the Aztecs of Mexico the drama had reached a very high plane of development, and many of their plays were written in poetic form. There was no regular building devoted to the drama, but at the time of a performance a platform, which, according to Cortez, was six feet high and thirty feet square, was erected in the market-place of the town. In some villages this was permanent. The principal one, which was at Tlatelulco, consisted of a terrace of stone. When it was to be used it was decorated with branches of trees, and various colored mats with the coat of arms of the city upon them, were hung around the sides.

If a stage of this sort was not used, the lower

<sup>1</sup> See Chambers "The Mediæval Stage."

step or porch of the temple was made to serve for the performance. This was decorated for the occasion with arches made from trees, feathers, and flowers, and from which hung birds, rabbits, fruits, and other objects. It was to this outdoor theatre that the people hastened after dinner. When all was ready the actors appeared and went through various scenes of buffoonery in which the deaf, lame, blind and paralyzed were mimicked. At other times merchants, mechanics, or prominent citizens were burlesqued. "Each actor endeavored to represent his rôle in the most grotesque manner possible. He who was for the moment deaf gave nonsensical answers to questions put to him; the sick man depicted the effects of pain and so forth." When these had finished, other actors dressed as beetles, toads, or lizards took their places. A conversation ensued between these various animals in which each explained its function on the earth and said that it had been here first. These actors in hopping and jumping around the stage were clever in representing the actions of the animals which they impersonated. Following these were the pupils from the seminaries and the boys from the temple, who were dressed as birds and

butterflies. These little actors hid in the trees while the priests pelted them with pellets of earth and while doing this gave them comic admonitions. The performance ended by a ballet in which all of the performers took part.

The actors were all very carefully rehearsed in their parts so that no slips would be made. The children were taken in hand by the priests when they were very young and trained in singing. They were taught long epic poems in which the deeds of great heroes were set forth. These poems were probably used during these festival occasions.

This description of the drama of Mexico is of special interest, for it is the only one which has yet been found. The kind of acting displayed "recalls the stage of Thespis rather than the art of Æschylus," but it is none the less important in completing the picture of the drama of the lower races of man.<sup>1</sup>

Among many savage peoples the plays are of an historical character wherein one portrayed actual events of the past.

The Mayas of Yucatan have bands of professional actors who wander from house to house

<sup>1</sup> Biart, "The Aztecs," pp. 302 ff.  
Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 291 ff.

giving little plays, for which they receive gifts. At regular entertainments these bands hold performances under the leadership of a master of ceremonies. He not only gives instruction to the actors but also directs the singers and musicians. This personage is very similar to the one who conducts some of the plays in Australia and on the Andaman Islands.<sup>1</sup> As a rule, the plays are of an historical character, based on some deeds of their ancestors or on other important events of the past.<sup>2</sup>

The Guajiqueros, although not a civilized people, tell much of their early history in the drama, which has come to be a well-recognized institution among them. A square piece of ground is chosen for the performance. In two corners are set up single poles, one of which bears the head of a deer, and the other that of a jaguar. When everything is ready, a dull music is heard outside and presently two bands of youths slowly enter the square and take up their positions around the poles which bear their respective insignia. After they have settled themselves, each side sends out a man, who, pretending to be bent with age, dances around

<sup>1</sup> See Ch. VII, pp. 227, 230 (note).

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 711 ff.



in a grotesque manner, much to the amusement of the spectators. Soon these two old men meet and a lively discussion ensues, which ends in both returning in a rage to their respective camps. When these ambassadors have told the men of the result of the conference, great excitement takes place. Both parties start to dance backward and forward around the square until they meet in the centre. Again the old men step forth, one at a time, and recount the deeds of prowess and bravery of their own tribes. This brings shouts of joy from one side, but hisses and other signs of disapproval from the other. Finally such a pitch of excitement is reached that the men are unable to contain their wrath any longer. The talking ceases, the music begins, and a mimic combat is in full swing. After advancing and retreating a number of times the jaguars lose their standard and take flight. The victors execute a dance of triumph, but this is soon turned to grief when they realize how many of their friends have fallen. With heads bent upon their knees, they break out into loud moans and sobs. Finally one of them arises and gives a eulogy for the fallen and this is followed by certain ceremonies and sacrifices. Hardly have they finished when the conquered

are seen to be approaching with lowered eyes and carrying in their hands tribute, which they lay at the feet of the victors. This brings the performance to an end.<sup>1</sup>

In Samoa the natives give dramatic performances showing some of their relationships with the whites. The interesting circumstance in the particular play about to be mentioned is that women take all the parts rather than the men. It represents the visit of a naval officer and his men to a native village. The leading woman acts the part of the officer, and the other girls the sailors.<sup>2</sup> They go through a mock drill "in which it is hard to say which is the more grotesque, the imitation of the manual of arms performed with cocoanut leaf stalks in place of muskets, or the attempt of the girl to give orders in some sort of gibberish, which she thinks reproduces the sound of the English words." After the drill is over the girls take again their natural characters as members of the village.<sup>3</sup>

Some years ago a great tidal wave swept over some of the Polynesian Islands, killing many of

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, *loc. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 737 ff.

<sup>2</sup> In the drama of Java the natives imitate the daily life of Chinese and Arabs, and even Europeans are represented in a most laughable manner. G. A. Wilken, "Volkenkunde," Ch. V.

<sup>3</sup> Churchill, "Samoa 'Uma'," p. 76.

the inhabitants and destroying much property. A very few people escaped in small canoes to some of the neighboring islands which were untouched by the storm. The story of this event is now acted by about six or seven natives.

During the performance an epic poem is sung telling of the various tragic events. First, a man comes in, carrying a young sapling which he sticks into the ground. This represents the young and flourishing colony before the disaster. The next man carries an ax, with which he cuts down the tree; this is the tidal wave striking the islands. The last scene consists of all the actors pulling a small canoe away, which is the escape of the few survivors. During this part the song changes to a dirge.<sup>1</sup>

This bit of dramatic representation, simple as it is, shows one very important phase in the study of the exact history of savage peoples. There is here the acting out of a known incident which took place within the memory of the now living inhabitants of the Polynesian Islands. This event has been put into the form of a very definite epic poem-play. The time will come in the future when the memory of this event will

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Crampton of Columbia University, Sigma XI lecture delivered in the Sheffield Scientific School, March 7, 1911.

have passed out entirely, but the play will remain as a tradition whose origin is lost in obscurity. Our descendants may see this acted and then by looking up the records will find that such an occurrence really took place. Hence there is a means there of determining the truth or falsity of tradition, and may, perhaps, help to determine how some of the people came to occupy the islands where they now live.

In order to show how important it is in determining the history of a people, if a means is found of checking up some of their traditions, a quotation will be given from Tylor. "The South Sea Islanders, who till quite lately had no writing, were intelligent barbarians, much given to handing down recollections of bygone days, and in one or two cases which it has been possible to test among them, it seems as though memory may really keep a historical record long and correctly. It is related by Mr. Whitmee, the missionary, that in the island of Rotuna there was a very old tree under which, according to tradition, the stone seat of a famous chief had been buried; this tree has lately blown down, and sure enough, there was a stone seat under its roots, which must have been out of sight for centuries. In the Ellice group the natives de-

clared that their ancestors came from a valley in the distant island of Samoa generations before, and they preserved an old worm-eaten staff, pieced to hold it together, which in their assemblies the orator held in his hand, as the sign of having the right to speak. This staff was lately taken to Samoa and proved to be made of wood that grew there, while the people of the valley in question had a tradition of a great party going out to sea exploring, who never came back.”<sup>1</sup>

Among the Euahlayi tribe of Australia there is a play, or rather a dramatic incident, which tells of the coming of the first boat up the Barwon. A log is hollowed out, plastered over with mud, and painted to represent the boat. A smaller log, bored out, is placed in the middle for the funnel. In one side is a little hollow in which a fire is made so that the smoke may pour out of the stack. The natives, who first appear, represent the various birds, such as cranes, pelicans, black swans, and ducks. The motions of each bird are graphically represented, and, as they perceive the strange boat their startled cries are given. This noise causes some armed natives to come on to the scene in order

<sup>1</sup> Tyler, “Anthropology,” p. 374.

to discover the cause of the disturbance. When they see the boat they start back in astonishment, but finally come together for a consultation in order to determine the best method of dealing with this strange monster. One by one they seize their weapons and approach the shore in order to get a better view of the boat. At this instant some one stokes the fire so that clouds of smoke and sparks belch forth. In terror the blacks retreat into the bush.<sup>1</sup>

In these last two descriptions the basis of the action has been some real historical event which has been recorded in this dramatic form, and while they can hardly be called plays, for there is no plot, yet they clearly belong in a discussion of this sort as showing an early development in the pure form of the drama.

One bit of drama of the Australians shows their keen perceptive powers and their ability to act out an incident seen or experienced. It is acted by one man and shows his endeavor to cross the Snowy River in a leaky canoe during a flood. He starts by pushing the canoe off

<sup>1</sup> Parker, "The Euahlayi," pp. 130 ff. At times of festivities a burlesque on the more serious war dance is given, in which are shown the preparations, the warpath, the attack and defeat of the enemy, and the joyful return.

E. Palmer, "Notes on Some Australian Tribes," 13 J. A. I. p. 289.

and paddling into the stream. When there, a leak is discovered and he tries very ineffectually to bale it out. Failing in this, he makes a hasty retreat to the shore, stops up the hole with mud, and finally paddles successfully across.<sup>1</sup>

In some of the plays in Australia the natives display their histrionic ability by acting tragedy, comedy, and farce, all of which are of their own composition. In late years many of the scenes represent incidents which have taken place in their contact with the whites. Mr. Gideon S. Lang witnessed a very elaborate play at which about five hundred natives were present, but only a small portion of these took part. The stage was in an open glade which was about two hundred yards long and had a rather thick growth of trees for the background. At one end was the orchestra composed of one hundred women and led by a well-known native named Eaglehawk. "The leader," says Mr. Lang, "chanted a description of the scenes as they passed, accompanied by the women, their voices continuously repeating what seemed to be the same words, while they beat time by striking with a stick a quantity of earth, tightly rolled

<sup>1</sup> Howitt, "Native Tribes of Southeast Australia," pp. 423 ff.

up in a piece of cloth or opossum rug. The moon shone brightly, lighting up the stage and the tops of the trees, but casting a deep shadow below. This shadow, however, was again relieved by several large fires on each side of the stage, leaving a clear view to Eaglehawk and the orchestra, behind whom stood the spectators, the whites being in the centre. The first act of the corroboree was the representation of a herd of cattle, feeding out of the forest, and camping on the plain, the black performers being painted accordingly. The imitation was most skilful, the action and attitude of every individual member of the entire herd being ludicrously exact. Some lay down and chewed the cud, others stood scratching themselves with hind feet or horns, licking themselves or their calves, several rubbing their heads against each other in bucolic friendliness. This having lasted for some time, scene the second commenced. A party of blacks was seen creeping towards the cattle, taking all the usual precautions, such as keeping to the leeward, in order to prevent the herd from being alarmed. They got up close to the cattle at last, and speared two head, to the intense delight of the black spectators, who applauded rapturously. The hunters next went



through the various operations of skinning, cutting up, and carrying away the pieces, the whole process being carried out with the most minute exactness. Scene the third commenced with the sound of horses galloping through the timber, followed by the appearance of a party of whites on horseback, remarkably well got up. The faces were painted whity-brown, with an imitation of the cabbage tree hat; the bodies were painted, some blue and others red, to represent the shirts; below the waist was a resemblance of the moleskin trousers, the legs being covered with reeds, tied all around, to imitate the hide leggings worn in that district as a protection against the brigalow scrub. These manufactured whites at once wheeled to the right, fired, and drove the blacks before them. The latter soon rallied, however, and a desperate fight ensued, the blacks extending their flanks, and driving back the whites. The fictitious white men bit the cartridges, put on the caps and went through all the forms of loading, firing, wheeling their horses, assisting each other, etc., with an exactness which proved personal observation. The native spectators groaned whenever a black fellow fell, but cheered lustily when a white bit the dust; and at length,

after the ground had been fought over and over again, the whites were driven ignominiously from the field, amidst the frantic delight of the natives, while Eaglehawk worked himself into such a violent state of excitement that at one time the play seemed likely to terminate in a real deadly fight."<sup>1</sup>

In a study of this sort it is impossible, even for the sake of comparison, to give a detailed account of the dramas of other peoples besides the savages, and hence only the briefest cross references can be made to the higher planes of culture. In the plays of the Greeks there can be found the same basic ideas as appear in the historical plays of the savages. People the world over, delight in the stories of their own brave men, and if they do not put these deeds into the form of a dramatic composition or an epic poem, they enjoy retelling them by the camp fires at night to each new generation as it reaches a sufficient age. But as a rule, if the people have

<sup>1</sup> Smyth, "Aborigines of Victoria," pp. 170 ff.; Thomas, "Australia," p. 124; E. Grosse, "The Beginnings of Art," pp. 207 ff.; Thomas, "Source Book of Social Origins," pp. 577 ff. On the Andaman Islands they frequently have a director of the dance and music who is, as a rule, a poet and the composer of the dance melody. He beats time on a sounding board with his foot for the dancers and the singers. E. Grosse, "The Beginnings of Art," pp. 207 ff.; Thomas, "Source Book for Social Origins," pp. 580 ff.

developed the dramatic art to any extent, they have their war plays, in which are recounted the glories of the past.

In the Polynesian Islands, instead of the priests and the important members of the groups taking part in the pleasure plays, there exists a condition which was common in a very much higher state of society. That is, the actors were members of the lowest strata, and they were forced to take part in all exhibitions, and to dance and act for the edification of the spectators.<sup>1</sup> In many countries of a more developed civilization the slaves were made to perform for their masters, for dancing was looked upon as a degrading task.

Many of the plays of the Polynesians closely resemble the Greek plays in regard to their subject-matter, for they are based upon the legends or achievements of their gods and upon the exploits of their distinguished heroes and chieftains. The stories are told in the ballads, the actors performing the various deeds described.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Ellis, "Polynesian Research," Vol. I, p. 241; W. R. Inge, "Society in Rome Under the Cæsars," p. 230. "The actor was ranked with slaves, and barbarians . . . he generally was a slave or freedman, or a native of some country where his profession was more esteemed, such as the Greek colonies and the East generally."

<sup>2</sup> W. Ellis, "Polynesian Research," Vol. I, p. 199.

Among the Greeks the Choregus was a very important functionary. Before a play could be presented to the public it was handed to the Archon, who read it. If it was thought worthy to be given before the public at the festival of Dionysus a Choregus was chosen to present it. These men were of great wealth, and the choosing and paying of the chorus devolved upon them. As a rule, the poet trained his own choruses, although at times a professional trainer was called in. The Choregus was not only obliged to pay for the members of the chorus, the flute player, and the mute characters on the stage, but he had also to pay for the elaborate costuming of all under him.<sup>1</sup> However, the Choregus of the Greeks differed from that of the savage and of the later stage in that he did not appear at the performance. A similar functionary exists on the island of Java. He has entire charge of the performance and not only coaches and pays for the actors and music, but also recites the lines himself. The actors merely carry out in pantomime the meaning of the lines.<sup>2</sup>

In the leader of the savage plays, who tells

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Haigh, "The Attic Theatre," pp. 53 ff.; J. W. Donaldson, "The Theatre of the Greeks," p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> Wilken, "Volkenkunde," Ch. V.

the story of the various parts of the play, we see the expositor who in the drama of the Middle Ages commented on the scenes in the passion plays and expounded their meaning.<sup>1</sup> In Greece this function was performed by the chorus. At the present time, in the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau, the Choregus, or leader of the chorus, comes forth before each act and tells the story of the events to follow, for in former days the audience were not able to read and this means was adopted of bringing before them the Bible stories and moral teachings.

When the first regular drama began in Greece the people were probably on a very much higher stage of culture than any of the savage peoples about whom we have been studying. Hence the development of their drama was comparatively rapid, and it was only a relatively short time between the plays with a serious religious purpose and the plays for pleasure. Probably, at first, as we have seen in a previous chapter, the exploits of the gods were told in a manner similar to that employed by the Polynesians and other savage peoples. However, there seems to be little doubt that between these crude stories and the plays of Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles

<sup>1</sup> B. Matthews, "Development of the Drama," pp. 11 ff.

there must have been an intermediate step of which we have no record, for it seems impossible to conceive of this highest form of literature springing directly from the crude attempts of a primitive people.<sup>1</sup> No savage tribes have a literature of this sort, but it is logical to conclude that if they had been left to themselves they would have developed one, for they possess the attributes necessary for such a production. They have the dramatic, the poetic, and the imaginative feelings, and to these need only be added the art of writing, and the basis for a dramatic literature is laid. However, before this occurs the culture of other races shall come to them so that the opportunity for developing a pure native literature will be lost.

Thus we see that there are practically no races so low in the scale of civilization as not to have the drama in some form. There are three stages in its development: first, when its purpose is to convey definite meaning, and is used at a time when the spoken language is inadequate; second, when its purpose is entirely religious and when its performance enables the people to communicate with the gods and spirits; and third, when the religious element drops out,

<sup>1</sup> Harrison, "Themis," p. 334.

leaving only the shell whose object is merely to amuse those before whom it is performed. To the savage this latter stage is of the least importance, for nothing very definite is accomplished by it, but to the civilized man it forms the greatest height to which the drama has yet reached. In these pleasure plays of the savage we are able to get the closest connection between the drama of a low and that of a high civilization.





## *SUMMARY*



## CHAPTER VIII

### *SUMMARY*

OF all the arts which the world has known, that of the drama is one of the most widespread — and by drama we here include not only the higher stages in its development, but also the first efforts of savage man to express his ideas by a crude pantomime. There are no races so low in the scale of civilization that mimicry does not play some part in the lives of the people. In regard to this growth of the drama from its simple beginnings up to modern times, Professor Brander Matthews says: “The dramaturgic faculty is evolved slowly with the growth of civilization; and play-making skill is one of the latest of human accomplishments. But the rudimentary effort is everywhere visible, even among the most primitive peoples. As we consider the history of human progress, we perceive that the drama is almost the very earliest of the arts, as early, perhaps, as the art of personal adornment; and we discover, also, that it is the very latest to attain

its complete expression. Only among the races which may be exceptionally endowed with energy of imagination and with power of construction does the drama arrive at its highest possibility of achievement. In these rare cases it is the splendid expression of the special gifts of these races; it is the sublime summit of their literatures. But in the noblest work of the Greek dramatists, and in the most powerful plays of the Elizabethans, the same principles are applied which we discover doubtlessly in the rudest theatrical attempts of the lowest savages.

"It is out of crude efforts, such as may still be observed among the Eskimo and the tribes of the Amazon, that the dramatic art was toilsomely developed by our own predecessors as taste refined and civilization advanced. The traditions of these rude play-makers were passed down from generation to generation, and the art slowly discovered itself. The true dramatist is like the true statesman in recognizing that nothing survives which is not a development of institutions already existing."<sup>1</sup>

It must be remembered that in a very large number of the dramatic performances of the

<sup>1</sup> Brander Matthews, "The Development of the Drama," pp. 6 ff.

savages we have present merely the germ of an art which is later to develop into a much more perfected form. The same relationship exists between the drama of these primitive people and that of a later time, as exists between the rough stone hatchet and the steel ax of civilized man. The cruder forms must always precede the more complex. In tracing social evolution we do not ignore the rough chipped stone hatchet because it is not as perfect as one made of steel, nor should we ignore the early dramatic attempts of the savage, although they may consist merely in the imitation of the actions of animals. In the case of the hatchet and in the case of the drama we should take the evidence carefully into account, for only by so doing are we able to realize the history of our civilization.

A comparison of the three typical periods of dramatic development cited before, will tend to bring together many of the ideas which have been set forth in the preceding pages. An axiom upon which all the history of the drama is based, is the fact that the desire to imitate is a universal human trait, although it does not appear to the same degree among all races of men. It is probable that this was almost as unconscious as the squinting of a young child when some one near

by squints, or the clapping of the hands together as the person whom it is watching does. Evidence seems to prove that the first practical use to which the savage put imitation (for it was then too simple to come under the head of drama) was to convey to his friends ideas and thoughts for which his inadequate spoken language had no words. This may be called dramatic narrative. Concerning this matter Miss Harrison says, "When a tribe comes back from war or from hunting, or even from a journey, from any experience in fact that from novelty or intensity causes strong emotion, the men will, if successful, recount and dance their experiences to the women and children at home. Such a dance we should scarcely call religious, but when the doings of dead chiefs in the past or ancestors are commemorated, when the dance is made public and social and causes strong emotion, it takes on a religious color. The important point to note is that the hunting, fighting or what not, the thing done is never religious; the thing redone with heightened emotion is on the way to become so. The element of action redone, imitated, the element of *μῦθους* is, I think, essential. In all religion, as in all art, there is this element of make-believe. Not the at-

tempt to deceive, but a desire to re-live, to represent.”<sup>1</sup>

The next use to which we see the savages putting the drama is in connection with their religion. As their gods and spirits were at one time human, it is only natural that they should use, as a means of presenting their petitions, a language which the dwellers in the other world could understand, for they had used it on this earth when they were alive. The basis of most of the savage religious drama is sympathetic magic. All the animal ceremonies which play so important a part among many peoples, and the plant ceremonies so widely spread among those races who are partially dependent upon a vegetable diet, have as their dominant motive sympathetic magic. So hard is the struggle for existence among the majority of the savage peoples, that their minds are scarcely raised above the actual getting of food. They gather what few plants they can, but their main article of diet is the animal. Practically the earliest dramatic religious ceremonies are in connection with the animals, and they long persisted. As we have seen, with the exception of the war ceremonies and a very few others, most of the

<sup>1</sup> Harrison, "Themis," p. 43.

acting has had to do in some way with animal life. It is only when a higher stage of culture is entered upon and the minds of the people are raised above the actual getting of food that we find the form and theme of the drama changing. The plays of the Greeks and those in the Middle Ages do not have this animal element to any extent; whereas but few savage people, as far as we have been able to discover, have reached that stage where it does not appear in some form during their entertainments. We even see it among some of the peoples of high civilization in Mexico and Peru, though to a less extent than in other places.

The Initiation Ceremonies, especially in the countries where the totem has an important part, show another form taken by the religious drama. The history of the totem (mainly animals often regarded as tribal ancestors of the far distant past, and thus closely related to their religion) is shown to the boys in the little plays which have been made up for that purpose. In these initiation ceremonies the boys are not only taught the morals of their group, but are also instructed in the secular history of their people. But totem ceremonies, especially in Australia, have much more important functions



than merely teaching the boys their history. As the totem plants and animals form the chief food supply it is important that the boys know the ceremonies whereby these may be obtained.

The acting out of historical events by savage peoples corresponds very closely to the pageants which frequently take place in civilized communities. The purpose in each case is to teach the people through a visual presentation about their own past. A great difference lies in the fact that among the savages the religious element forms the background to nearly all of their drama. This element may be compared to a single fixed scene on a stage before which as a background, tragedy, comedy, farce, and opera are acted and sung. The historical savage drama finds in these civilized pageants a closer relationship than in almost any other form of drama. In both, the acting is the dominant motive, while the lines, if they appear at all, are supplementary.

Another serious purpose to which the religious drama is put, appears in some of the war ceremonies, where requests through the agency of sympathetic magic are presented to the gods so that in the coming struggle the petitioners may come off conquerors.

In comparing the dramas of Greece and the Middle Ages with those of the savages we have seen that they have many elements in common. The Greek drama started with sympathetic magic vegetation rites, which, after many changes and ramifications, appeared in the form of the plays of the great dramatists. When we reach the Middle Ages we again find the rebirth of the drama in religion, but of less importance than in either of the other two stages. It is true that the drama was used at first to a certain extent as an act of worship, but it had a very much more serious purpose in that it was intended to instruct the people concerning the Bible, which they were unable to read for themselves. It is interesting to trace the drama in the Church, from the time when almost unconsciously it was used to worship, down to the much later secularizations. The mass of the Roman Catholic Church was and is "an essentially dramatic commemoration of one of the most critical moments in the life of the Founder. It is his very acts and words that day by day throughout the year the officiating priest resumes in the face of the people. And when the conceptions of the mass developed until, instead of a mere symbolical commemoration, it was

looked upon as an actual repetition of the initial sacrifice, the dramatic character was only intensified.”<sup>1</sup>

Some of the festival seasons, such as Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Christmas, were chosen by the Church for graphically portraying during the service, scenes from the New Testament appropriate to the particular season. During these little plays songs would be sung explaining the various actions of the characters.<sup>2</sup> In these latter we see the tendency away from absolute worship, as in the case of the mass, towards the plays given for the instruction of the people. As time went on, the production became so elaborate that for the performance, they needed not only the space around the altar, but also part of the transepts and the nave. Later, when it became necessary to increase the performance in size, the church proved too small and so they had recourse to the porch before the west door, to the graveyard, or to the neighboring market-place.

Not only did the absolute separation from the actual worship take place, but also the subject-

<sup>1</sup> E. K. Chambers, "The Mediæval Stage," Vol. II, pp. 3 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For a full discussion of these church dramas see E. K. Chambers, "The Mediæval Stage."

matter of the now well-developed plays changed in a striking manner. Material was obtained from the Old Testament, so that there appeared such plays as "Adam and Eve," and "Cain and Abel." These finally became so secular that the Church refused to have anything more to do with them and thus closed upon the drama the doors of religious interest.

There are some striking analogies to be drawn between the drama of the savages and that of the Middle Ages. It was used by both at a very early stage purely as an act of worship, the difference being that the savage was asking for very definite material aid, while the more civilized man was petitioning for spiritual salvation, and trying to propitiate the deity by adoration. In the initiation ceremonies the boys were taught the history of their people, and also the morality of their tribe. The priests of the later culture instructed the people in the Bible history through the Mystery Plays<sup>1</sup> and by the dramatic scenes from the Old Testament, and tried to raise their standard of virtue through the Morality Plays, in which the actors showed the continual struggle between the Virtues and the Vices.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chambers, "The Mediæval Stage." For a history of the Miracle Plays, see Dr. Karl Hase, "Miracle Plays and Sacred Dramas."

<sup>2</sup> C. F. T. Brooke, "The Tudor Drama."

Thus we see that the stages through which the savages, the Greeks, and the people of the Middle Ages passed in the development of their dramas are in many respects similar. It is true that the attempts of the savages are very much cruder than those of the other two, and they have developed little dramatic literature; nevertheless a study of their actions is important as showing the lower stages in the evolutionary development of the drama.

A passage from Professor Matthews may serve to summarize a number of points emphasized in the preceding pages. "It is from the observation of children and from the study of savages that the comparative anthropologist has been able to throw so much light on the earlier stages of human progress. Professor Grosse, in his illuminating discussion of the 'Beginnings of Art,' points out that pure narrative 'requires a command of language and of one's body which is rarely found,' and that 'children and primitive peoples likewise are indeed unable to make any narration without accompanying it with the appropriate demeanor and play of gesture.' Professor Grosse notes that common usage means by a drama, 'not the relation of an event enlivened by mimicry, but its direct mimic

and verbal representation by several persons'; and he asserts the existence of this in even the lowest stages of culture. He recognizes as one root of a more elaborate drama the duet of the Greenlanders, for example, in which 'the two singers are not only relating their adventure, but are representing it by mimic gestures'; and he finds a second source in the mimic dance. Out of one or the other a true drama gets itself evolved at last; and its slow rise in the dramatic scale is in strict proportion to the rise of the people itself in the scale of civilization. The form is enlarged and enriched; it expands in various directions; it will lack literature for long years, until at last there arrives a dramatic poet who takes the form as he finds it, with all its imperfections and inconsistencies. He accepts it without hesitation, certain that it will serve his purpose, since it has already proved that it is satisfactory to the contemporaries whom he has to please. In time, after he has mastered the form as he has received it from his predecessors, he makes it his own and remodels it to his increasing needs, when he has gained confidence in himself, and when he has broadened his outlook on life." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matthews, "Development of the Drama," pp. 8-10.

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